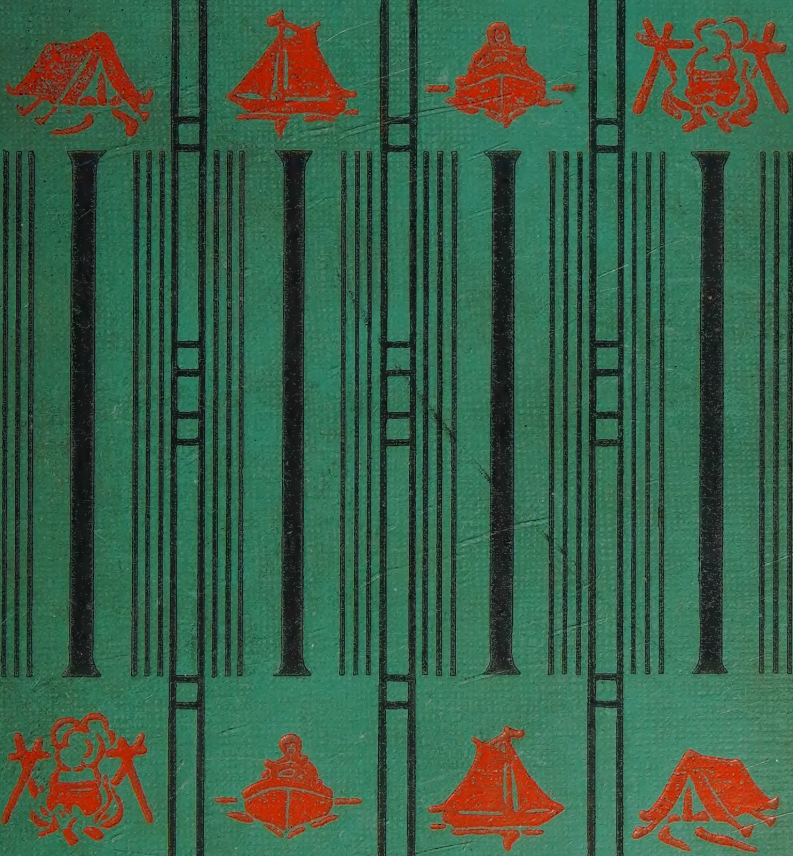
LOST IN THE CANYON



By ALFRED R. CALHOUN

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"Sam succeeded in guiding the raft to a ledge of sloping rocks."
—(See page 65.)

LOST IN THE CAÑON.

THE STORY OF

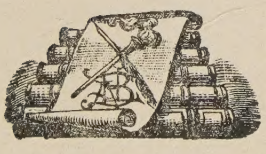
Sam Willett's Adventures on the Great Colorado of the West.

By ALFRED R. CALHOUN,

Author of

"Cochise," "Excelsior," "The Californians," etc., etc.

ILLUSTRATED.



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LOST IN THE CAÑON.

By Alfred R. Calhoun.

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LOST IN THE CAÑON.

CHAPTER I.

A REMARKABLE CAMP.

THE SCENE of this narrative is laid in Southwestern Colorado, and the date is so recent that boys living out there at that time are only just beginning to think themselves young men—and it is really astonishing how soon boys leap into vigorous manhood in that wild, free land.

"We's 'bleeged to hab 'im, for dah ain't de least scrap ob meat in de camp!"

This stirring information was shouted by a stout negro boy of fifteen or sixteen years of age, who, with a long, rusty, single-barrel shot-gun in his arms, stood at the base of a towering mass of bare rocks, and looked eagerly up at two other youths creeping along the giddy heights, and evidently in eager search of something that had escaped them, but which they were determined to overtake.

The lithe form, long black hair, and copper-colored skin of one of the young hunters bespoke him an Indian of the purest type. He wore a close-fitting buckskin dress, and slung at his back was a short repeating rifle.

The other youth up the rocks, though bronzed on the hands and face to a color as dark as the young Ute's, had the blue eyes and curly yellow hair that told of a pure white ancestry. His name was Samuel Willett, and though not much more than sixteen years of age, his taller form and more athletic build made him look several years the senior of his red and black companions.

Sam Willett was armed and dressed like a hunter, and his well-worn equipments told that he was not out masquerading in the costume of a theatrical Nimrod.

The Indian youth, Ulna, and Sam Willett had chased a Rocky Mountain or bighorn sheep into the mass of towering rocks which they were now searching; and that they were not hunting for mere sport was proven by Ike, the black boy's repeated cry:

"We's 'bleeged to hab 'im, foh dar ain't de least scrap ob meat in de camp!"

"I want tc get the meat as much as you do, Ike, so have patience!" Sam shouted down, without stopping in his pursuit an instant.

The two daring hunters disappeared, and Ike, whose desire for meat was greater than his love for the chase, began circling about the confused pile of rocks so as to keep his companions in sight.

The bighorn "sheep" is in reality not a sheep at all, but a variety of powerful mountain antelope, whose strength, speed and daring among the rocks and cañons are not the least wonderful things about the wonderful land in which he makes his exclusive home.

Even old Western hunters believe that these animals

can leap from immense heights and land on their horns without harm, but this is an error.

While Ike was gazing with eager eyes and open mouth at the towering, volcanic cliffs, the bighorn came to view on a rock five hundred feet overhead.

The hunters were close behind, and the creature's only means of escape was to leap across a chasm fully thirty feet wide to another rock of a little lower elevation.

"Shoot! shoot!" yelled the excited Ike, as the bighorn gathered himself up and eyed the terrific gorge that beset his course.

As if stung to desperation by the shout the creature leaped forward with a force that must have cleared the gulf, and an accuracy that would have insured a landing on the other side, but just as it sprang into mid-air two shots rang out within a small fraction of a second of each other, and the bighorn came crashing down and fell dead at the black boy's feet.

In his wild excitement Ike discharged the rusty single-barrel shot-gun, which he had been hugging in his arms as if it were a baby. All the power of the old-fashioned weapon must have been in the report and recoil, for the former sounded like the explosion of a howitzer, and the latter was so terrific as to send the holder sprawling across the carcass of the bighorn.

Sam Willett saw all this as he hurried down the rocks, otherwise he might have thought when he had reached the bottom that the animal had fallen on his companion and faithful servant and killed him.

"Hello, Ike, old fellow, what's up?" asked Sam, as he helped the owner of the shot-gun to his feet.

"Is I all alive, foh shuah, Mistah Sam?" demanded Ike, as he stared wildly about him.

"Of course you are, and here is the meat you have been so eager for," said Sam.

"Wa'll, Mistah Sam, it's dat ar gun," said Ike, gazing sadly at the old weapon which he still held in his arms. "I ain't used her bad; ain't fired her off for more'n six months afore we kem out har from Michigan—dat's five months ago—an' now only to tink she's done gone back on me in dat are way."

The Indian youth, Ulna, had come down by this time, and when he took in the situation his fine, almost effeminate face was wreathed in smiles, that displayed a beautiful set of white teeth.

In a low, musical voice and without any accent, he said in excellent English:

"The sun is setting and we must hurry if we would reach the camp before dark."

"An' more partikler ez we've got to tote dis ar venizon home," said Ike, now wide awake to the necessities of the situation.

Each of the youths had a hunting knife in his belt, and they soon proved that these weapons were not carried for ornament.

With a rapidity and skill that would have won the admiration of an eastern butcher, they skinned and cleaned the animal, severed the mammoth head and then divided the meat into three parcels.

Each had to shoulder about fifty pounds, but being sturdy, healthy young fellows they did not seem to mind

their burdens, as they started off with long, vigorous strides toward the west.

The sun in all his course does not look down on a wilder, grander or more desolate land than that which met the gaze of the young hunters, no matter to which side they turned.

Verdureless mountains of fantastic shapes rose into the cloudless sky on every hand.

Here and there in the crevices of the black volcanic rocks, over which they hurried, a stunted sagebush or a dwarf cactus suggested the awful barrenness of the place rather than told of vegetation.

They were in the land of cañons and drought, on the summit of the Great American Plateau where rain but seldom falls, where the streams flow through frightful gorges, and where men and animals have often perished from thirst within sight of waters which they could not reach.

Bleak and sublime as the land was, is, and ever must be, yet the belief—a well founded belief by the way—that its gloomy ravines contained gold, led hundreds of hardy miners and adventurers to look upon it as that El Dorado for which the early Spanish explorers in these wilds had sought in vain.

As the leader of the little party, Sam Willett, strode ahead, the deepening shadows of the mountains impelled him each instant to a quicker pace.

There was no apparent trail, yet Sam never hesitated in his course, but kept on as unerringly as a bird of passage, till he came to a great black rift that seemed to suddenly open at his feet.

Away down in the shadowy depths he could see a white band that told of moving water.

A glow, the source of which could not be seen, indicated a fire down near the base of the cliff, and the barking of a dog—the sound appeared to come from the depths of a cave—suggested a human habitation.

On reaching the crest of the chasm Sam Willett did not hesitate, but at once plunged down to what, to a stranger, would appear certain death.

Along the cañon wall there was a steep but well constructed trail that afforded secure footing to a traveler who was not troubled with giddiness.

Without once stopping, Sam and his companions made their way to the bottom of the rift and forded the roaring torrent that thundered over its uneven bed.

On the cañon wall, opposite to that by which they had descended, they saw about a hundred feet above the stream, what seemed like a number of illuminated pigeon holes. This was their home, the place to which had been given the not inappropriate name of "Gold Cave Camp."

With barks of delight, a big dog met them near the water and joyously escorted them up the other side to an irregular plateau, about a hundred feet in diameter, that shot out like the once famous Table Rock at Niagara.

This plateau was in front of the cave, in which the miners had made their home.

The background of light revealed the forms of three men. The dress and long cue of one bespoke him a Chinaman, the second was dressed like a hunter, and the

third, a tall, powerful figure, had only his heavy beard and striking stature to distinguish him.

"Is that you, Sam?" called out the tall man, as the foremost of the party reached the plateau.

"Yes, father," was the reply, "and we have brought back some meat.

"Wa'll!" exclaimed the second man, "I didn't think thar was a pound of live meat left within twenty mile of yar."

"Hoolay! Bully! Now me gettee suppel!" cried the excited Chinaman, who was known by the fitting name of Wah Shin.

Preceded by Maj, the dog, Sam and his fellow hunters entered the remarkable cave—of which we shall speak hereafter—and laid the meat on the floor.

"I began to grow uneasy about you, my boy," said Mr. Willett, as he fondly kissed his son, "meat is very desirable, but I would rather suffer for it than be worried at your absence."

Sam explained about the delay in the hunt, and then went to a spring that rose from the floor of the cave close to the fire, and here he set the example of drinking and washing himself.

Meanwhile Wah Shin began to demonstrate his position in that strangely mixed company. In nearly no time he had steaks broiling on the coals, the savory odor of which made Hank Tims, the old guide, take long inhalations with great enjoyment.

Apart from meat there was an abundance of other food in this strange camp, so that in a very short time

Wah Shin, with Ike's aid, had a most excellent supper spread on a table consisting of two roughly-hewn cedar slabs, supported at either end by a square stationary stone, that had been placed there by the original but unknown cave dwellers.

CHAPTER II.

LOOKING BACKWARD AND FORWARD.

IT IS not a little remarkable that the six dwellers in Gold Cave Camp should represent four of the five types into which scientists divide the human race, but this though curious in itself, is not nearly so much so as their being residents of this sparsely settled wilderness, and living, as it were, in caves in the depths of the earth.

Mr. Willett had been a merchant in Detroit, Michigan, where his only child, Sam, was born.

He had been very happy in his married life and very prosperous in his business; but, alas, for the stability of human affairs, his wife died. Following this awful calamity came a series of reverses in business which no human foresight could prevent. His property was swept away, and in his fortieth year he found himself a poor man, with a son to educate and care for and all life's battle to fight over again.

Mr. Willett had been educated as a mining engineer, and though he had never followed his profession he, very naturally, looked to it as a means of support when all his other resources were gone.

In the days of his great distress and perplexity he read of sudden fortunes being made in the newly-discovered

gold fields of the San Juan country in Southwestern Colorado, and thither he determined to go.

Although still in the prime of life, Mr. Willett concentrated all the love of his brave heart on his son and resolved to devote his time and thought to his care and education.

Sam's maternal grandfather, Mr. Shirley, was a very rich, but a very morose and eccentric old man, who chose never to become reconciled to his daughter's marriage to Mr. Willett. But when Sam's mother died, the old gentleman offered to adopt his grandson and make him his sole heir, if the father would consent to renounce all claims to him.

In his son's interest Mr. Willett might have considered this proposal favorably had not Sam himself upset the scheme by saying stoutly:

"Father, do not ask me to leave you, for I feel it would be sending me to death. If you go to the West, I shall go with you. There are only two of us left, why should we be parted?"

Mr. Willett replied to this query by kissing his son, and so it was settled that they should go to the West together.

Ike was an orphan lad who, in some inexplicable way, had drifted up to Michigan from Kentucky. Mr. Willett found and cared for the boy, and he repaid this generosity by a fidelity and devotion worthy of all praise.

Mr. Willett could see no use for Ike in the West, but when the time for departure came, the black boy appeared at the depot with an old hunting bag, containing

all his clothing, slung at his back, and a remarkable-looking shot-gun folded in his arms.

"Dar's no use a talkin' to me, boss," he said to Mr. Willett, when that gentleman expressed his surprise at the boy's appearance. "Ize bound to go 'long wid Mistah Sam. Oh, don't yeh feel skeat 'bout de cash foh de passage. Ize got ebery cent I ever earned stored away har; its more'n fifty dollar, an' I'll foot de bills till de las' red cent's gone."

In proof of this bold statement, Ike drew from the depths of his trousers' pockets a bag containing several pounds weight of bronze, nickel and silver coins.

Ike found an eloquent advocate in Sam; and so it came about that at the very last moment Mr. Willett decided to take the colored boy with him, though he could not be made to avail himself of the generous fellow's hoardings.

The three went to Denver, thence over the Rocky range to St. Luis Park, and over the Sierra Madre mountains to the San Juan country.

They had procured horses to ride on, and two pack mules to carry their supplies and mining tools.

While at Fort Garland in the St. Luis Park, they met with Hank Tims and the Ute boy, Ulna, who was a nephew of the great chief Uray, whom the writer of this narrative knew very well and greatly admired.

Hank Tims and Ulna were themselves thinking about going into the San Juan country, and, as they were well acquainted with that region and appeared to take to Mr. Willett's party at once, they were readily induced to join his expedition.

It would be out of place in this brief but essential review to recount all the adventures that beset our friends till they reached the scene of their proposed labors.

After much wandering, they found Gold Cave Camp, but it was in the possession of a wild, dissolute fellow named Tom Edwards.

As Edwards was working his claim all alone and was eager to leave it, Mr. Willett bought him out at his own price, and at once made preparations to pan for such gold as might be found in the bed of the cañon.

A few days after the commencement of operations, Wah Shin appeared in the camp.

He looked as if he had been blown in from the bleak hills, but he managed to explain in his broken English that he had lost himself coming up from Santa Fe, and that he was a first-class cook.

He asked for "a job," but even before Mr. Willett had made up his mind to hire him, he set to work to give an exhibition of his skill; and the result was so entirely satisfactory that he was retained on his own terms.

But it is much easier to explain the presence of these people than it is to account for the strange home in which they lived.

Learned men claim that long before the coming of the white men to this continent, long, indeed, before the coming of the Indians, that there was a strange race of people in that Western land, whom, for the want of a better name, they call "The Cave Dwellers."

But no matter how formed, or by whom they were first

inhabited, these caves—they are quite common in that land—made ready and comfortable homes for the mining adventurers.

Those occupied by Mr. Willett and his associates, consisted of a series of eight apartments, all opening on the plateau and all connected by passage ways that must have been the work of human hands.

The apartments were circular in shape, and the largest, which was used as a kitchen and general store room, was about twenty feet in diameter and ten feet in height.

As before stated there was an ample spring of delicious cool water in this apartment, and the original hewers of the caves, no doubt, selected the place on this account.

After a hearty supper, Mr. Willett and Hank Tims lit their pipes and sat before the fire, for though the days are warm in this land the nights are unusually cool.

Drift wood, picked up from the crevices of the rocks in which it had been lodged by floods caused by the melting of snow in the mountains, constituted the fuel of the camp, and the great pile near the fire showed that it was to be had in abundance.

All had been working hard that day, so after a desultory talk about the great success that was meeting their search for gold, they lay down on their blanket cots in the other apartments and went to sleep—that is, all but Sam and his father.

Mr. Willett and his son slept together in the nearest room, but though they lay down side by side they did not go to sleep at once.

"Sam," said Mr. Willett in a troubled voice, "since you left this morning that fellow, Tom Edwards, has been here again.

"What did he want?" asked Sam.

"He appeared to be drunk, and he threatened to kill me if I did not give him more money."

"But you have paid him the price agreed on?"

"Yes."

"Then I should not heed him."

"Still, I am afraid he will cause me trouble, so, to-morrow, I will ride over to Hurley's Gulch and consult a lawyer, and as that is our nearest market and post-office, I will take Hank and Ulna along with two pack mules so as to carry back supplies."

"That is forty miles away, so that you will be gone several days. But if you must go, father, I will do the best I can while you are absent," said Sam, laying his hand soothingly on his father's broad breast.

"I know you will, my boy, but there is another matter I wished to speak with you about."

"What is that, father?"

"Why, this Tom Edwards brought me a letter from your grandfather's lawyer in Michigan. It tells me that the old man is dead, and that in his will he leaves all his property to you, but you are not to have a cent of it till you are twenty-one years of age——"

"Four years and a half, dear father!" cried the excited Sam.

"But," continued Mr. Willett, "the will further says that if you should die in the meantime that the

property is to go to your grandfather's nephew, Frank Shirley."

"A bad, disreputable man to whom neither you nor mother would speak," said Sam.

"He is all that, I fear, and it troubles me to learn from Edwards that Frank Shirley has recently come into this land," said Mr. Willett.

CHAPTER III.

SAM'S TRIALS BEGIN.

WHILE daylight was flooding the upper world next morning, and the shadows were lifting from the gloomy depths of the cañon, the modern cave dwellers ate their breakfast.

About three hundred yards above the caves the cañon widened out into a valley some three hundred yards in diameter. The bottom of this valley was covered with rich grass, and in it was a grove of cotton-wood trees whose bright verdure gave the place the appearance of a rich emerald gem in a mighty setting of granite.

In this valley the horses and pack mules were kept, and, as they had but little to do, they might be said to "live in clover."

While it was still dusky in these depths, though the glimpses of far-off ruddy mountain peaks told that the sun was rising in the upper world, Sam and Ike, who were hardly ever apart, went up to the valley and soon returned with three horses and two mules, the latter were to carry back the necessary supplies from Hurley's Gulch.

It had been Mr. Willett's custom to make this trip once a month, so that his going now was not an unusual event, yet his face showed that he was much de-

jected, as if he had a premonition of the awful calamity that was so soon to come upon himself and his beloved boy.

His last words, as he kissed Sam, were:

"If anything should happen to detain me longer than four days, I will send a letter back by Ulna."

"But we'll be back on time," joined in Hank Tims, "for I don't like crowds, an', then, we've struck pay dirt rich up at the head of the valley, an' I'm just a spilein' to see how it'll pan out to the ind."

Good-bys were said, and Sam, Ike and Wah Shin stood on the plateau before the cave and waved their hats, till the three men had led the animals up the giddy trail and disappeared beyond the towering summit of the cliff.

Under the teaching of his father and Hank Tims, Sam had become a skillful gold miner, that is, so far as panning out the gravel and collecting the gold were concerned.

The fact that he was the prospective heir to a large fortune did not unfit him for work this morning. With Ike he went up to the sluices immediately after his father left, and until the sun was in mid-heaven they worked, shoveling gravel into the cradle and rocking it under the water, and only stopping to pick out the nuggets and yellow dust and scales that rewarded their effort every hour.

By means of an old-fashioned horn, Wah Shin summoned them to dinner. Of the fresh meat he had made pies that would have tempted an invalid's appe-

tite. And, as the boys ate, sitting before the entrance to the cave, the Chinaman's face fairly glowed with delight at the evidence of his excellent cooking.

"Ven'zon pie belly good," chuckled Wah Shin, as he produced a second when the first had vanished. "But man eatee too muchee, den get mebbe sick."

"Dat ar edvice is 'tended foh Mistah Sam," laughed Ike, as he helped himself again. "But vanzon pie an' 'possums are two tings I ain't nebber got my fill ob up to dis time."

Sam heard but did not heed the talk of his companions, for his attention was at the moment attracted to two strange men who were slowly making their way down the trail on the opposite side of the cañon wall.

As there was danger from prowling bands of Indians who had left the reservation, and also from white outlaws who frequently robbed weak mining camps, every one at Gold Cave Camp strapped on a belt, with a knife and pistols in it, as regularly as he pulled on his boots.

Starting to his feet and followed by Ike, Sam went down to the stream, getting there just as the two men reached the bottom.

One of the strangers was a tall, dark-bearded man, with one eye, and the other was a short, yellow-skinned man with a mean expression of face, whom Sam recognized as his cousin, Frank Shirley.

Sam had never spoken to this man, so he did not greet him like an acquaintance now.

Both men were well armed, as is the fashion of the

country, and when they came within hailing distance, Frank Shirley called out:

"Hello, young man, is this Mr. Willett's camp!"

"It is, sir," was Sam's reply, as he came to a halt.

"Is Mr. Willett home?"

"He is not."

"Where is he?"

"He has gone to Hurley's Gulch."

"When did he leave?"

"This morning."

"Ah, I'm sorry I missed him. When do you expect him back?"

"In a few days. Won't you come over and have some dinner?" asked Sam, waving his hand in the direction of the plateau, on which Wah Shin was visible.

"Thank you; no. We are going on to Hurley's Gulch, and are in a great hurry," said Frank Shirley, turning and whispering to his companion, who nodded vigorously in response.

"Who shall I say called?" asked Sam, as the two men turned to ascend the trail.

"Friends," was the laconical reply.

"If dem's frien's," said Ike, when the men had gone out of hearing, "den Ize de biggest kind ob a foe."

The conversation of the two men when they reached the top of the cliff proved the black boy's surmise to be correct.

They had left their horses hitched to a rock, and as they prepared to mount, Frank Shirley said to his companion:

"That's the boy, Badger."

"The boy ez stan's atween you an' fortune?" said Badger.

"Yes."

"Wa'll, ain't you hired me to help you clear the way?"

"I have, Badger."

"Good; then let us git rid of the father first, an' then all the rest'll be ez smooth ez ile."

"You will stick to your contract?"

"I'd be a fool if I didn't. You pay expenses an' give me ten thousand dollars to get 'em out of the way. Isn't that it?"

"That's it, Badger," said Frank Shirley, as he mounted and rode along beside his companion.

"That ar boy down thar," said Badger, waving his hand back at the cañon, "ain't no slouch. He'll fight, he will; an' the best way with sich is to give 'em no chance."

"No chance," echoed Frank Shirley, "that's it exactly. And now that we have them parted our opportunity has come."

"Just ez if 'twas made to order," said Badger.

After the men had gone, Sam and Ike went to work again, but the former had lost the cheerfulness that distinguished him in the morning.

He could not get those two men out of his mind, not that he feared their return—indeed, he could not account to himself for the strange feeling of dread that possessed him for the next three days.

While working, on the afternoon of the fourth day

since his father's departure, he noticed that the sky had become overcast and that the water in the bed of the stream was rapidly rising.

He and Ike quit work earlier than usual, and they had great difficulty in making their way to the caves through the swollen torrent.

They had hardly reached cover when a terrific storm came up and the cañon became as dark as night, while the roar of the waters and the crashing of the thunder were ceaseless and appalling.

It was about nine o'clock at night, and the three occupants of the cave were sitting with awed faces before the fire, when, to their inexpressible surprise, Ulna, the young Ute, stood dripping before them.

"How did you reach here?" asked Sam, springing to his feet and grasping Ulna's hand.

"I rode till I killed my horse, then I ran for hours. The flood was up, and it is rising, but I managed to swim across——"

"But my father!" interrupted Sam, pleadingly laying his arm on the young Indian's shoulders."

"He and Hank Tims are prisoners at Hurley's Gulch," said Ulna.

"Prisoners."

"Yes, and in the hands of the lynchers who charge them with the murder of Tom Edwards. Here is a letter from your father that will explain all," said Ulna, pulling a damp paper from his pocket and adding, "your testimony is wanted at once to clear the accused; but no man can cross the cañon for a week, and then it will be too late!"

CHAPTER IV.

A PERILOUS SITUATION.

SAM WILLETT had courage and fortitude in no common degree, but the words of Ulna, who stood dripping and panting before him, froze him with a speechless terror.

He took the wet paper from the Indian boy's hand, but for some seconds he had neither the courage nor the strength to open it.

The howling of the wind down the gorge and the hoarse roaring of the maddened waters heightened the terror of the situation.

Wah Shin, though not well versed in English, fully understood the import of Ulna's message, but realizing his own inability to do or to suggest anything, he stood with his lips drawn and his little oblique eyes half closed.

Ike was the only one of the party who did not appear to have lost the power of speech. Taking the letter from Sam's hand, he said:

"Dat ar paper's powahful damp, an' I reckon, Mistah Sam, yeh kin read it bettah if so be I dries it so's it won't fall to pieces."

Ike opened the paper and while he held it before the fire, Ulna briefly explained the situation.

He said that Mr. Willett, Hank Tims and himself reached Hurley's Gulch without any mishap.

They found the rude mining camp in a great state of commotion owing to a robbery and murder that had recently been committed.

The more law-abiding, or rather the more industrious, for there was no organized law in the place, had formed a vigilance committee to hang the next murderer or robber, under the wild sanction of "lynch law."

"Just as soon as we reached Hurley's Gulch," continued Ulna, "we met Tom Edwards, and he was very drunk and very abusive. He shouted to every one he met that Mr. Willett had robbed him, and took Gold Cave Camp from him without paying a cent, though he had promised fifteen hundred dollars."

"Why, the man lies infamously!" interrupted Sam. "I was a witness to Edwards' receipt for the money in full, and I have it here among father's papers."

"And that receipt is what your father must have at once in order to clear him of the charge of robbery and murder," said Ulna.

"Murder!" repeated Sam.

"Yes. Last night Tom Edwards was found dying with a pistol bullet in his breast, and with his last breath he swore to the men who found him that your father and Hank Tims shot him to get rid of paying the money they owed him. The vigilantes at once arrested Mr. Willett and Tom, and they swear they will hang them if they do not prove that Tom Edwards was paid. I saw the money paid myself, but they refuse to take the

word of an Indian," said Ulna, with a flash of indignation in his splendid black eyes; then continuing, "but they agreed to let me come here for the paper."

'Heah!" cried Ike, springing from beside the fire, 'de lettah's dry enough to read. Let's know w'at Mistah Willett he has to say foh hisself."

Sam took the paper, and kneeling down to get the benefit of the light, he read aloud as follows:

"MY DEAR SON:—I do not want you to be at all alarmed at my detention. Ulna will explain why neither Tom nor I can return till you have brought us the receipt which Tom Edwards signed when I paid him the money in full for his claim at Gold Cave Camp.

"This receipt you will find among the papers in my saddle-bags. Bring it to me with all speed and leave Ulna back in charge of the camp; it does not matter if the mining ceases till we return.

"I regret to have to tell you that Tom Edwards is dead. He was drunk when he received the shot that killed him, and he accused Hank and me of the crime. If the people here knew us well they would not believe this charge for one instant, but they do not, and so we must wait till we can show the vigilance committee who hold us prisoners, that we could have no motive for, even if we were inclined to do this awful deed.

"I saw Frank Shirley here yesterday afternoon in company with a well-known desperado who goes by the name of 'One-Eyed Badger.' I cannot but think that these two men are at the bottom of this new trouble, but what their reasons can be I cannot even guess; certain it is that I have never done them or any one else a wrong knowingly.

"Do not lose heart, for I have no fear as to the result: only come as soon as you can to your loving father,

"SAMUEL WILLETT."

Sam read this over rapidly, then he read it a second time with more deliberation.

"De boss am in a bad fix," groaned Ike, "an' I jest wish I could take his place."

"I shall go to my father at once," said Sam, stoutly.

He went to the saddle-bags, got the necessary papers—the receipt and deed—and placed them securely in the inner breast pocket of his buckskin tunic.

"You no gettee on holse an' lide such night as deez coz it was so muchee stolmy?" said Wah Shin when he saw Sam getting out his saddle, bridle and rifle.

"I must get to Hurley's Gulch before another day," was the resolute reply, "if I have to go there on my hands and knees."

"But you cannot go to-night," protested Ulna. "Come and see the danger."

He took Sam by the arm and led him out to the plateau before the entrance to the cave.

It has been said that it but seldom rains in this land, but when it does the watery torrents come down with a continued fury, of which the dwellers in more favored climes can have only the faintest conception.

The bare rocks refuse to absorb the rain as it falls, and so the ever-accumulating waters sweep into the cañons and fill the narrow beds between the precipitous banks with wild torrents, that must be once seen before an adequate idea can be formed of the tremendous and seemingly irresistible power of water in action.

The four occupants of the caves, all fine types of four human races, went out to the plateau.

The light, streaming through the cave opening, cut across the inky blackness of the cañon like a solid yellow shaft, that made the surrounding darkness more impenetrable.

Laden with sheets rather than drops of rain, the wind swept down the ravine with a force that threatened to tear the observers from the rocks and hurl them into the seething torrent.

"Before this time," said Ulna, speaking with the calmness that distinguished all he said, "the valley is flooded and the horses up there are drowned."

Sam shuddered but made no reply.

He went back to the cave, secured a lighted brand, and, returning to the edge of the plateau, he dropped it over.

It went hissing down. If the current were as low as the day before it should have fallen sheer down for a hundred feet, but before going half that distance, it lit up an expanse of water white with foam, and was extinguished.

The result of this experiment brought Sam's heart to his mouth, and he could not have uttered a word if the life of the father he so well loved depended on it.

"If she keeps on a-climbin' up dat way," groaned Ike, "de watah'll be nigh into de cave by mawnin'."

Sam now recalled that he had found driftwood lodged in the crevices of the rocks, even higher than the entrances to the cave, and from this he inferred that at the highest water no one could stay in the cave and live.

Maj, the fine setter dog, had been moaning beside the

fire all the evening, but now he came out and crouched at his young master's feet, as if his instinct told him of the danger and that he wanted protection.

Fearing that the poor horses were gone, and well knowing that it would be madness to attempt to cross the cañon that night, Sam turned sadly to his companions and said :

"We can do nothing till daylight comes. Let us get in out of the storm."

They returned to the cave and silently sat down on the stones that had been placed for seats near the fire.

It was a most trying situation.

Even if Mr. Willett and Hank Tims had been safely there in the cave, the ever-increasing storm and the possibility, or rather the certainty of its danger if it continued would have been sufficient to drive sleep from the eyes of all.

But Sam Willett, brave, unselfish youth that he was, gave no thought to the peril of his own surroundings.

With his chin resting between his up-turned palms, he looked steadily at the dying fire without seeing it.

His heart and his thoughts were ever with his sorely-tried father at Hurley's Gulch, and he groaned as he read in the beating of the storm the edict that might bar his going to the rescue.

But though unmindful of himself, it was not in Sam's nature to neglect the comfort of others.

"Lie down, all of you," he said to his companions, "and I will stand guard till daylight comes."

After a weak protest, Wah Shin, Ulna and Ike brought in their blankets and lay down before the fire.

Ike pretended that he did not want to sleep, but, after an attempt at desultory talk, his eyes closed and he soon became oblivious to his surroundings.

Maj continued to be restless and frightened. Now and then, as if to judge for himself how the storm was getting on, he would go to the cave opening, and, after whining in a pained way for some seconds, he would come back and crouch down near the fire with his nose resting on his young master's knees.

To sorrow-stricken Sam Willett that night seemed like an eternity of darkness.

He was beginning to feel that the storm had destroyed the sun, when the grey light of another day began to creep slowly into the cave.

CHAPTER V.

AT HURLEY'S GULCH.

HURLEY'S GULCH, though subsequently called "Hurley City," has no right on the map if it ever had a place there, for, like many other more ambitious and important cities, it has ceased to be the abode of man and returned to its original state of barrenness and desolation.

It was at this time a mining camp that had sprung up in a night, as it were, when a man named Hurley—after whom the place was named—had discovered gold in a little creek near the spot that so suddenly became the site of busy mining life.

Though less than six months old and destined not to survive a second birthday, Hurley's Gulch had nearly a thousand inhabitants, with stores, saloons, assay offices, hotels and all the business establishments that characterize such places.

There were a few women in the camp and a sprinkling of Indians, Negroes and Mexicans, but the great mass of the inhabitants were miners, rough in appearance and even rougher in speech.

A more picturesque and novel settlement than Hurley's Gulch it would be impossible to find outside the peculiar mining camps of the West.

Two little streaks of grass could be found growing beside the creek on the bluff above which the camp had been established; but beyond this there was hardly a sign of vegetation in sight.

All about the place, far as the eye could reach, was a tempest-tossed expanse of dry, glistening rocks.

As there was neither timber for building nor material for bricks, the dwellings, stores, saloons, hotels and offices were necessarily of canvas.

The tents were pitched here and there irregularly, and as all of them had seen hard service in other mining camps and "cities," their general appearance was patched and dilapidated in the extreme.

The great majority of the men at Hurley's Gulch were industrious miners; but as vultures hover over the track of an army in the field and wolves follow up a buffalo herd to prey upon the weakest, so crowds of well-dressed gamblers and red-faced whisky sellers swarm in prosperous mining camps to plunder and demoralize.

Hurley's Gulch had more than its share of these wicked fellows, and as there was not the shadow of law there to defend the weak, every man went armed as a matter of course.

Until law officers can be elected or appointed and courts of justice established in such camps, it is the custom of the more industrious and peaceable to form what they call "vigilance committees" for their own protection.

It need not be said that, no matter how well-meaning the purpose, many men, themselves criminals, get on

such committees, and that great wrong is often done to the innocent by these rude efforts to do justice.

Mr. Willett's was a case in point.

A few days before he had come over this last time to Hurley's Gulch, a hard-working miner had been killed and robbed of the gold-dust which he had patiently panned out from the bed of the stream.

This crime made the miners angry, and they held an indignation meeting after the poor man's funeral, and organized a committee to ferret out and punish the criminals.

As there was no jail in which to detain those guilty of lighter offences, there was only one penalty in the code of the vigilantes, and that was *death!*

Tom Edwards had not been a favorite with the better class of men at Hurley's Gulch.

In his opinion money was made for the sole purpose of gambling away and getting drunk on.

It was generally believed that he had been paid for his claim at Gold Cave Camp by Mr. Willett, so that many who heard him declare to the contrary and say that he had sold on credit, placed no faith in his word.

But when Tom Edwards was found dying the night before Mr. Willett was to have left the Gulch, his past falsehoods were forgotten in view of the nearness of his end and the calmest were inclined to believe him.

It was well known that hot words had passed that very day between Mr. Willett and Tom Edwards, and this afforded to many a reason for the act.

It was pitchy dark when the wretched man was shot,

and he was very drunk at the time, so that when his wound restored him, for a short time, to his senses, there can be no doubt but he was honest in the belief that "two men," Mr. Willett and Hank Tims were the guilty parties.

The accused men were at once arrested by the vigilance committee and placed under guard in a tent.

Both protested their innocence, as well they might, and Mr. Willett asked to be permitted to send to his camp for papers that would prove to all that he had paid Tom Edwards in full the price at which he valued his claim.

A few men were inclined to believe Mr. Willett, but to set all doubts at rest, it was decided that further action should be postponed in the case till the receipt of the money and the deed of sale had been procured.

The next morning Ulna was dispatched on this mission, and we have seen the fidelity with which he performed the duty and the unexpected obstacles that prevented the return of the accused man's son with the papers.

There were two men at Hurley's Gulch at this time who, if they had chosen, could have set at rest all doubts as to the mystery surrounding Tom Edwards' death and handed over the guilty parties to the vigilantes; but as this act would have resulted in their own swift destruction, they kept their awful secret to themselves.

These men were Frank Shirley and the outlaw Badger.

Frank Shirley believed, and with reason, that if Sam Willett was out of the way, the last bar between him and a great fortune would be down.

He was a dissolute, thriftless fellow, every faculty of whose low mind seemed to have been concentrated into the one mean gift of cunning.

On the way from Gold Cave Camp to Hurley's Gulch, Frank Shirley and the man whom he had hired to help him in his wicked purpose, discussed the situation from every point of view.

The first thing they decided on was that Mr. Willett and his son must be prevented from ever meeting again, but they did not agree so readily as to how this was to be done.

More bluff, and possibly more brutal than his employer, Badger urged that he be allowed to waylay Mr. Willett and kill him on his return.

But Frank Shirley opposed this, saying, for he was a coward at heart, as all such men are:

"Willett will have with him the Indian boy and the old hunter, Hank Tims; they are all well-armed, and they would be stronger than us. No, Badger, we must hit upon some plan that has less risk in it."

"Wa'al," responded Badger, "hit upon the plan yersel', an' if I don't carry it out without flinchin', I'll give you leave to shoot me down like a dog."

When these men reached Hurley's Gulch they found Edwards "drunk as usual," and loudly declaring wherever he went that Mr. Willett was trying to rob him out of fifteen hundred dollars.

Here was the very chance for which Frank Shirley had been looking.

If he could have Edwards put out of the way, in such

a manner as to fasten the crime on Mr. Willett, a hundred stronger and braver men would be ready to accomplish his purpose with their own hands.

He told Badger of his scheme, and that creature, without a moment's thought of the awful crime he was about to commit, pledged himself to carry it out when the other gave the word.

To add to the evidence against Mr. Willett, as that gentleman was arrested, Frank Shirley appeared to be very much cast down.

With tears in his eyes, he explained to the many who were only too eager to listen, that Mr. Willett had married his, Shirley's, cousin, that he had borne a bad character in Detroit, and that he had recently fled from that city to escape the consequences of his many crimes.

CHAPTER VI.

WHY THE PAPERS WERE NOT BROUGHT.

BEFORE awaking his companions, all of whom seemed to be sleeping heavily, Sam went out to see if the flood in the cañon had risen.

He ventured but a few yards beyond the entrance to the cave, for the sight that met his eyes appalled him.

The rain was still pouring down in torrents, and the flood had risen till it was nearly on a level with the plateau.

"Three feet more and it will be into the cave," he said, speaking aloud.

"Watel littee mole high up no cannee stay, mus' allee die if no can swimmee," said a voice behind Sam.

There was no need to ask whose it was.

Wah Shin, with thoughts of breakfast in his mind, had got up, but first he decided to satisfy himself of the condition of affairs outside.

"Yes, Wah Shin," said Sam, without turning his head, "even as I look at the flood it appears to be rising."

"If it come mole up, wat we allee do?"

"I don't know."

"No cannee stop dis place?"

"I fear not."

"Way we go den, no can tink."

"Nor can I think either, Wah."

"If no can lib, den no coz wy die hungly," said Wah Shin, and with this belief strong in his mind, he re-entered the cave and set about getting breakfast with his usual indifference to the state of the weather.

At any other time the sight of the flood and the danger of its coming higher would have alarmed Sam greatly, but though he could not ignore the danger that threatened him now, his own situation was lost sight of as he thought of his father's position.

He was still standing looking at the rushing flood, as if fascinated by its power and volume, when Ike and Ulna came out and joined him.

"Foh massy's sake!" exclaimed Ike, when he caught sight of the water. "Ain't she jest a bilein' up."

"Do you think the water will rise higher?" asked Sam as he turned to Ulna, and tried to find some comfort in his calm, impassive face.

Before replying Ulna looked up at the sky for some seconds, then said:

"The storm is not half over."

"And while it lasts the water will go on rising?"

"Yes, Sam, that is what we must expect."

"Then it will flood the cave?"

"It will surely do that."

"And drive us out?"

"Yes, Sam, if we don't want to drown there."

"Then we must try to leave?"

"Yes, we must try to leave," echoed Ulna.

"But how can we get away?"

"Ah," said Ulna, with something like a sigh, "I cannot now think of how that's to be done."

"If so be we was all birds, we could fly," said Ike, very solemnly, "it'd come in mighty handy-like jest 'bout dis time."

Sam now realized that he must think and act for his companions as well as for himself.

His was a brave, sturdy, self-reliant nature, that grows stronger and stronger in the face of increasing trials and responsibilities.

"Let us go in out of the rain and think," he said, while he turned and nervously stroked his forehead.

When they went back to the cave they found that Wah Shin had a good breakfast ready, and was still busy cooking more food.

When asked by Sam why he was doing this, he said, as if it were a matter of course.

"Bime by, watel him come in, puttee out file; file him go out, no can cookee; no got tings cookee, no can eat; no eatee den allee mus' die."

"Well, Wah Shin," said Sam with a grim smile, "if there is any hope in cooking, keep at it while the food lasts."

Despite their troubles and the dangers that cut them off from the world and threatened their lives, all, Maj included, complimented Wah Shin's efforts in their behalf by partaking of a hearty breakfast.

During the meal Sam was unusually silent; it was evident he was thinking very hard, and the others did not

attempt to disturb his deliberations till he had risen from his seat, then Ulna asked:

"Have you thought out a way to get across the cañon, Sam?"

"I have thought out a way of trying it," he answered.

"How?"

"On a raft."

"But we have no raft."

"Then we must make one."

"Where is the timber?"

"There is some here in the form of slabs and firewood, and there is plenty whirling down with the flood. You can handle a lariat, Ulna?"

"I think I can," was the response.

"Then get a rope, we have a lot here in the cave; make a noose and secure all the long pieces of timber you can. The water is nearly up to the plateau, and Ike will help you pull them out."

"An' watee can me do?" asked Wah Shin.

"Keep right on cooking, for if we cannot cross the flood on the raft, we'll be swept into the great cañon of the Colorado, and there we shall need all the food we can take along."

The others set to work with a will, but even Ulna, who was born out in that land, only faintly comprehended the import of what Sam said about the great cañon.

Indeed, Sam himself had only a vague notion of what was meant by the now famous geographical name.

He knew the history and geography of his own coun-

try very well, as every well-trained youth should, and he was, therefore, aware that the great Colorado of the West was formed by the junction of two important rivers, the Green and the Grand; he was further aware that the water roaring outside entered the latter river about twenty-five miles below the camp.

Had these been ordinary rivers there would be good reason to dread venturing out on their currents at flood time, even in a good boat; but the Green and the Grand for many score miles above their junction flowed through immense rocky defiles or cañons, and they united in one mighty cañon, through which flowed for fully four hundred miles the waters of the Colorado on their way to the Gulf of California.

Sam had talked a great deal about this wonderful chasm with Hank Tims, and that most reliable authority had assured him that only two parties had ever attempted to go through the great cañon and returned to tell of their perilous adventures and hair-breadth escapes.

Hank claimed to have stood on a cliff that rose straight up from the edge of the Colorado at one point, and looked down a sheer perpendicular depth of over seven thousand feet, the very thought of which is enough to make an ordinary head giddy.

But Sam helped to make a craft that would enable them to cross the two hundred feet that separated them from the opposite bank, and this accomplished in safety, they could make their way on foot to Hurley's Gulch, where he knew his father was eagerly awaiting his coming.

He secured all the gold dust about his own person, and then made up bundles of blankets, provisions and ammunition that might be of use if they did not succeed in making a crossing.

This done, he went out and found that Ike and Ulna had succeeded in staying and landing a great deal of drift-wood, just the thing for a raft, and a number of stout poles that might be used in guiding it.

By this time the flood had risen still higher and higher, and was now ankle deep on the plateau outside the cave opening, and there was not a moment to lose.

With an energy that was all his own, and a skill that surprised himself, Sam set about building the raft.

By means of ropes, the longer timbers were securely lashed side by side, and over these, like a deck, the lighter slabs taken from the cave were nailed.

When this clumsy and insecure structure was completed, Sam saw that the food, blankets, arms and ammunition were tied so that they could not be swept off by the wash of the waters.

It comforted him somewhat to know that all his companions could swim, though the stoutest swimmer could not last long in the mad torrent sweeping past.

Sam assigned each one a position, and gave him strict instructions as to what he must do under certain circumstances; and Maj seemingly well aware of what was up, crouched down in the center of the raft.

"Now," said Sam, as he stood up, pole in hand, at one end of the raft, "we must wait for the current to float us off, and trust in God."

CHAPTER VII.

THE WONDERFUL VOYAGE BEGINS.

UNDER AND AROUND the raft the waters surged and poured, as if they were testing the strength of the frail structure before lifting it up and hurling it away to destruction.

With his feet well apart to balance himself, and the long pole ready in his strong hands, Sam stood pale but resolute.

They had only a few minutes to wait.

Ike and Wah Shin sent up a cry of horror as, with the roar of an angry monster, the current swept the raft into the stream.

With the grim stoicism of his race, Ulna looked about him without seeming to be at all disturbed by the awful situation.

Sam's object was to get across to the other side of the cañon and effect a landing with his party, for he never for an instant lost sight of the fact that his father's freedom if not his life depended on his reaching Hurley's Gulch at once with the papers in the Edwards case.

But alas for all the schemes planned by love and executed by courage! What was man's strength and daring to the weight of the piled-up, flying waters?

The instant the raft swung away from the plateau Sam

saw that his pole was of no use, for the river bottom was fully one hundred feet below the surface.

He tried to use the pole as a paddle, but his efforts had no effect on the course of the raft.

It was hurled like a plaything by some mighty, unseen power, into the center of the flood; then, with the speed of a racer urged on by whip and spur, the frail ark went flying down the cañon.

For the life of him Sam could not utter a word. His face was blanched, but it was not with fear, though death seemed now inevitable.

"What will become of poor father!" This is what poor Sam would have cried out if he could have given expression to the one thought that filled his brain and the one feeling that stirred his heart.

But neither Ike nor Wah Shin attempted to restrain their cries, though their voices were nearly drowned out by the never-ceasing roar of the torrent.

Wah Shin was terror-stricken, and in his fright he forgot his little store of defective English and shouted for help in his native tongue.

The effect on Ike was to change the color of his face to a dark grey, and to make the whites of his eyes very conspicuous. He was devoutly on his knees, though he clung to the logs with both hands, and prayed with an earnestness that there was no mistaking.

In much less time than it takes to describe the feelings of the passengers they were whirled out of sight of the caves and were rushing down between the towering cañon walls with a velocity that was truly appalling.

It was Sam's belief, as well as the belief of the others, after they saw that crossing was impossible, that they would be crushed by the great jagged rocks that beset their course, but they soon discovered that they were in the middle of the current, and that they were passing in safety the obstructions that threatened ruin every instant.

The bravest men tremble on the eve of their first battle, and their hearts sink when they hear the first rattle of the skirmishers' rifles. But as the time passes without their being shot down, they become indifferent to the dangers that at first alarmed and unnerved them, and fight with the coolness and confidence of veterans.

A sailor will laugh at a storm that is full of terrors to the landsman, for it is certain that familiarity with danger does breed contempt.

After the raft had dashed on for an hour or more, our friends began to feel confident and to look at the situation without fear in their eyes.

Ike was the first to speak; perhaps because Wah Shin had not yet regained his knowledge of English. After winking very fast for fully a half minute, he said:

"It don't seem like's if we was goin' to sink—at least not yet a bit."

He had to shout this out to make himself heard, and Sam, in response, had to speak in the same tones.

"If we can find a place where we can make a landing, I don't care how soon she sinks after that."

"Dar don't appeah to be much show foh a land in dese ar parts," said Ike, as he looked up at the walls

that not only formed the sides of the cañon, but which seemed to block their advance, for the course of the river was tortuous in the extreme, so much so, indeed, that they could but rarely see more than a few hundred yards in advance.

At length, and after they must have floated more than twenty miles, the cañon of Gold Cave Creek entered the much greater and more sublime cañon of Grand River.

Here the bed of the river was so much wider, that though there was more water in it, it flowed with a current that was calmness itself when compared with the fierce mountain torrent that had recently made the raft its plaything.

With a great sigh of relief, Wah Shin now proceeded to show that his knowledge of English had come back to him.

"Dees place no so belly bad likee dat place we way back alle come flom."

"This is Grand River," said Ulna, speaking for the first time, and seemingly as calm as if he were in a place of safety, as he added: "And further down all the cañons of the Green and Grand rivers unite to form the mighty Colorado."

"I hope we may be able to land before we reach there," said Sam Willett, who had now discovered that by means of the pole he could steer the raft in the calmer water.

Even the dog regained confidence. Maj had been crouching down on the blankets, and wincing and trembling with fear, but he sat up when the smoother

current was reached, and licked his lips and moved his tail in a way that left no doubt as to his approval of the changed condition of affairs.

But though the current of Grand River was slow as compared with that of Gold Cave Creek, it would be a mistake to imagine that it was at all stagnant.

The beds of all its tributaries were swollen at this time, so that the waters of Grand River were thirty feet above the average level and moving with a speed of four or five miles an hour.

Although continually watching for some place in which he could make a landing, it was not till near sunset that Sam found such a spot as he wanted.

The river soon widened out into a bowl-shaped valley, on the margin of which there were benches of dry ground, covered with stunted little cedars that gave a grave-yard appearance to the place.

By means of their poles Sam and Ulna succeeded in forcing the raft to the shore, where it was securely fastened, and Wah Shin and Ike sent up prayers of thanks, each after his fashion.

This arrangement had been made none too soon, for they had not finished removing the cargo from the raft when the black shadows of night seemed to rise up from the water, for the glow on the top of the cañon walls showed that it was still comparatively light in the upper world.

"Wa'al," said Ike when the last of the cargo was safely stored under the cedars, "w'at am de nex' t'ing on de programmy?"

"De nex' t'ing," replied Wah Shin as he began getting out his pots, pans and supplies, "is dat we makee file, den we has to gettee hot someting mebbe fol to eat."

This admirable suggestion met with general approval.

That there had been higher floods than this the driftwood lodged in the crevices of the neighboring rocks abundantly attested.

As it had not only stopped raining by this time, but the clouds had exhausted themselves and vanished from the strip of sky visible above their heads, they had no difficulty in starting a fire.

In the ruddy glow the yellow current, roaring and sweeping near by, took on the hue of blood, but our friends were too hungry, weary and anxious to be impressed by this.

Wah Shin had plenty of food cooked, but he very wisely thought that it would be more palatable if warmed over and a cup of good coffee added to the meal.

Despite the dangers that surrounded them and the woful anxiety about his father, that was never absent from Sam Willett's heart, he could not help being impressed by the wild weirdness of the situation.

He kept his feelings bravely to himself and expressed pleasure at the appetites shown by his friends, while trying to comfort them with a half-felt hope that they might be able to escape from the cañon on the morrow.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. WILLETT AND HANK TIMS.

MR. WILLETT and his friend and fellow prisoner, Hank Tims, were kept securely guarded in a tent situated in about the center of the straggling habitations that went to make up the camp at Hurley's Gulch.

Hank, who knew the country and the climate better than any white man in it, was well aware, from the continuence and violence of the storm, that it was spread over a wide area, and that the heavy rainfall and the consequent melting of snow on the crests of the higher mountains would flood all the streams flowing into the great Colorado.

He did not wish voluntarily to confess his fears to Mr. Willett, and yet he felt that it was only right that that gentleman should know what effect the storm might have on their own lives.

"Do you know what I have been thinking ever since night came and the rain has been dashing on the canvas over our heads, as if determined to get in?" said Mr. Willett, along toward morning, on the day following the departure of Ulna for Gold Cave Camp.

"Mebbe ye've been thinkin' that this is a powerful stormy night," answered Hank, at a venture.

"Yes, and that the storm will be apt to flood the cañon where the boys are."

"Wa'al," drawled Hank, as if weighing his words, "this yar rain'll be mighty apt to raise the creeks in the bottoms of the cañons."

"What if Ulna should not be able to get across?"

"He'll get across, no fear of that," said Hank. "But thar's another important pint in the case."

"What is that, Hank?"

"It's can Ulna git back an' fetch yer son with him."

"And what do you think about that, Hank?"

"I don't know what to think."

"But, surely, you have some idea."

"Oh, yes," said Hank, his hand to his ear to measure the sound of the pouring rain, and his gray eyes intently fixed on the ceiling, as if he were trying to find out when the flood would break through and drench them.

"Well," aaid Mr. Willett, nervously, "what's your opinion?"

"I don't really think that Ulna, or Sam, ken git back to Hurley's for days. Cos why, they can't cross the flood to the trail, an' no man could, onless he chanced to be rigged with wings, like a bird, an' up to this time I ain't run acrost a human mortal fixed in that way, though I'll allow that sich an addition would be powerful convenient at times."

"But if my son can't come here, what then?"

"You mean, how will it fare with us?"

"Yes, Hank, that is what I mean."

"Wa'al, it'll depend on many pints."

"Give me some of them."

"If the men in these diggins keep sober, we ken hope for fair treatment, but if they don't it'll go hard on us. But all that depends on the storm," said Hank, with great deliberation.

"On the storm?" repeated Mr. Willett.

"Yes; that's what I said. Of course, you understand that if the rain keeps on an' raises the creek har at Hurley's, then the miners won't be able to work for days an' days?"

"I understand that, Hank."

"Wa'al, if they don't work, an' have somethink to okerpy their minds, do you know what they will do?"

"I have'nt the slightest idea," said Mr. Willett.

"Why, they'll crowd into the saloons an' git drunk. When even a well-meanin' man is drunk he's a beast, but when these rough fellows drink that devil's broth, whisky, why it makes 'em reg'lar out and out fiends."

"I understand you," said Mr. Willett sadly.

The two men relapsed into silence and again lay down on the blankets that had been given them by the vigilance committee.

Hank Tims was right in his surmise.

Morning brought no cessation to the storm, and as a consequence the miners could not work, for Hurley's Gulch was transformed from a little stream into a raging torrent.

As has been before stated, a majority of these miners were industrious, honest men; and their vigilance com-

mittee, though apt to do wrong in its efforts to be just, had a repressing effect on the lawless element.

These men were honest in the belief that Mr. Willett and his companion were responsible for the death of Tom Edwards, and it must be confessed that all the circumstances—circumstances that were strengthened by the dying man's statements, pointed that way.

The "Grand Union Hotel," the most important establishment at Hurley's Gulch, was composed of three tents, and old dilapidated tents at that.

The front tent was occupied by a bar, the center tent as a kitchen and dining room, and the rear canvas afforded space for the guests to spread their own blankets and sleep as best they might.

Frank Shirley and Badger had their headquarters at the Grand Union. Here, the following day, the miners gathered to discuss the effect the storm might have on the return of the messenger with the paper that was to show that Mr. Willett had paid Edwards in full for his claim at Gold Cave Camp.

A few men believed Mr. Willett's story, but yet, in deference to the wishes of the majority they were willing to have a trial, but not till a sufficient time had passed for the floods to subside so that the messenger might have a chance to return.

Frank Shirley saw the drift of affairs, and, without seeming to do so, he made up his mind to direct it.

He was well supplied with money, and feeling that he had a large fortune to fall back on, if he managed his game properly, he decided to give every man, for

nothing, all the whisky he could drink, and then when he had the camp crazed with liquor to turn them at once against Mr. Willett.

In carrying out this monstrous scheme, Frank Shirley was ably seconded by Badger.

The storm continued throughout the day, but the sound of its fury was gradually deadened by the uproar of the drunken men in and about the Grand Union Hotel.

From being a well-meaning crowd of miners, they gradually became a mob of fierce and profane drunken men, with no more moral conception of their conduct than the inmates of a mad-house.

By the time night came again, they had forgotten their promise to give the accused men a hearing, and were resolved to slay them at once.

CHAPTER IX.

A FRUITLESS EFFORT.

THE BLANKETS and bundles carried on the raft were pretty well soaked by the rain and the whirling waters of the cañon, but as soon as supper was over Sam gave orders to have the things spread out and dried before the fire.

In this work all took an eager part, and as they had been able to collect plenty of fuel, they were enabled to build such a fire as had never chased the night shadows from that part of Grand River Cañon before.

When the blankets were dried they were spread over heaps of cedar boughs and made beds that would have tempted a dyspeptic to sleep.

But, though very weary, our friends did not lie down at once, but sat before the fire speculating and wondering if they would be able to climb out of the cañon on the morrow and make their way to Hurley's Gulch.

Although there was no danger in this place from wild beasts or savage foes, Sam Willett began to-night a system of guard duty which he kept up during all the nights of his perilous journey.

His great fear now was that the flood might rise and carry off the raft or drown out their camping-place, as it was evident it had done on many former occasions.

That they might not be taken by surprise, he divided the night into four watches, to begin at nine o'clock and to continue till five, when it would be broad daylight.

Each one was to stand guard two hours at a time and to wake the next one when his watch had expired. The order was to be changed every night so that no one would have to be on duty at the same time two nights in succession.

This arrangement met with the approval of all, and Sam took the first turn on guard.

The others lay down with the promptness of soldiers when the word of command was given, and they were soon sleeping soundly.

Sam had an excellent watch, the gift of his dead mother and valued accordingly, and this enabled them to measure the time with military exactness.

The flood rose about a foot during the night, but beyond this, nothing of a startling nature occurred.

They breakfasted the following morning before it was quite light, and when the glow of the rising sun could be seen on the crest of the peaks that towered for many hundreds of feet above the bed of the stream, Sam and Ulna started off to see if they could find a way to the upper world, leaving Ike and Wah Shin in charge of the camp.

These two worthies were the best of friends, and when together they talked in a way that would have been very amusing to any one who could have overheard it.

"Dis am a mighty queah place," said Ike, glancing about him after Sam and Ulna had got out of hearing.

"A belly funny hole, way, way down flom wo'ld," said Wah Shin as he imitated Ike's movements.

"Wah Shin."

"Go on chin, me heal you," said Wah Shin.

"Do you t'ink God made all de world?"

"Oh, me t'ink so," said Wah Shin carelessly.

"An' eberyting He made 's got some use?"

"Oh, yes, allee tings got some use—mebbe."

"An' He made dese canyons?"

"Don't know 'bout dem," said Wah Shin dubiously.

"Wa'al, if God didn't make de canyons, who did?" asked Ike, with a manner that indicated his appreciation of the great weight of the question.

To confess ignorance of a subject is a manly habit which very few are addicted to. Wah Shin at once proved that he did not consider himself an authority on all matters, for he said, promptly and frankly:

"Me don't know."

"Dey aint got no use, ez I ken see," continued Ike, "an' it's my farm belief dat dat oder pusson ez goes roun' like a roarin' lion dug out dese yer canawls an' den found ez he had no watah to fill 'em up wid."

"Mebbe so—me don't know."

"Now, if dey was filled wid fire," said Ike, with the same wise manner, "I'd call it a fust-rate job—ob de kind."

"Ha, ha!" roared Wah Shin, as if he caught the

sharpest point of an excellent joke. "'Spose alle file, den wat we do, eh?"

"We wouldn't be har," said Ike.

"But no cannee help oursels."

"Reckon yer right. Ez atween de two, I goes in foh watah ebery day in de week an' twice on Sundays. But if I'd had de buildin' ob dese yer canyons I wouldn't hab wasted sich a mighty sight ob stone in puttin' in de banks. But den eberyting in dis yer world ain't jest as we'd like to have it, so it's better to take tings as dey come; what do you say, Wah Shin?"

"We gottee take it as it come—no can help oulsels," said Wah Shin grimly.

This phase of the situation was so self-evident that even Ike could not think of objecting to it, so he began to whistle a hymn tune and to pack up the food and blankets so that they might be all ready to start when Sam and Ulna returned with the information that they had discovered a way out of the cañon.

But this hope, after having been strongly cherished for three hours, was doomed to disappointment.

Shortly before noon the two explorers returned, and though Sam's face told of his failure, Ike could not help asking:

"Wa'al, Mistah Sam, wat luck?"

"Poor luck, Ike," was the sad reply.

"Couldn't find de way out, eh?"

"There is no way to find. Every wall we came to is as high and steep as those about the camp," said Sam, with a sigh and an upward glance at the perpendicular

cliffs that appeared to be bending over them, as if the touch of a child's hand might tumble them into the chasm.

"Undah sich sarcumstances ez dem," said Ike, very solemnly, "wat do yeh tinks best to be done?"

"We must leave here at once."

"But how's it to be did, Mistah Sam?"

"We must leave as we came."

"On de raft?"

"Yes."

"Waal, dat's a heap sight moah comfotable way dan if we had to swim foh it," said Ike, with a sudden display of cheerfulness.

Sam now began to realize that their stock of provisions was small, that there was no way of replenishing them in the cañon, and that their stay in these depths was very indefinite, if, indeed, the chances were not all against their ever being able to get out.

He saw that it would be a mistaken kindness if he let the others or himself eat all that they desired, and great as his affection was for Maj, the dog, he regretted that the animal was along, for it made another and a very large mouth to feed.

With force and frankness he laid the case before his companions, and without a sign of dissent, they agreed to have the food so divided as to make it last for ten days, before which time the least hopeful was certain they would again be in the upper world.

A dinner of limited rations was at once eaten, and though it was ample, every one of them thought that

he could easily eat as much more and not feel that he was playing the glutton.

Again the cargo was placed securely on the raft, and Maj walked demurely on board and lay down on top of the blankets.

After strengthening the raft by the addition of some pieces of light, dry cedar, it was freed from its moorings and pushed into the current.

The four passengers occupied the same relative positions as on the previous day, Sam standing in the stern and skilfully steering the float from the many angry-looking rocks that jutted into the swift current.

As the light began to fade, Sam gazed eagerly in front and on either side in the hope of being able to find some expansion or ledge on which they could land for the night. But an impenetratable darkness settled over them, and they were still afloat in the cañon.

CHAPTER X.

A NIGHT OF AWFUL GLOOM.

WORDS CAN convey to the reader an idea of only those things with which he is familiar, or of which he can form a picture through his imagination, and even when the latter is vivid it must draw largely for its creation on things with which it is somewhat acquainted.

No pen or tongue could properly describe the situation and the feelings of the four human beings who through the long black hours of that night whirled and drifted down through the black depths of the cañon.

As it was useless to stand up and attempt to steer, for he could not see his hand held close before his face, Sam Willett crouched down on the raft, and clung with nervous hands to its trembling timbers.

Now and then they seemed to be floating through quiet waters, but just when hope came to cheer them with the belief that they had passed through the most dangerous part of the current, the raft would be hurled down long lines of rapids, or caught by some projecting rock it would be sent spinning around with a velocity that made the occupants sick with the whirling motion and the fear that the end had come. Such a situation would have tested the strength of the most experienced

nerves, even if the midday sun was shining into the chasm, but the darkness added to its terrors and filled the bravest with alarm.

On and on, and on. It seemed to Sam that they were sinking into the bowels of the earth, or flying away through the realms of night and the abode of impenetratable darkness.

Now and then he would look up at the few stars visible in the strip of sky far overhead, to assure himself that he was yet in the world of life and light.

They were floating down a quiet stretch of water when Ike called out in a tremulous voice.

"Say, Mistah Sam, ken yeh heah me?"

"Yes, Ike, I can hear," was the reply.

"How does yeh feel, 'bout dis time?"

"I feel hopeful, Ike."

"Why does yeh feel dat way?"

"It is my disposition," said Sam, for want of a better answer.

"Got any ideah wot's de time?"

"I have not, Ike."

"How long does yeh tink it is since *de sun went down foh de last time?*"

"About eight hours," said Sam, though, judging by his own feelings, it seemed like so many days.

"Eight houahs!" exclaimed Ike. "Oh, Mistah Sam, yeh's away clar off de track."

"How long do you think it is since the sun went down?" asked Sam, for the sound of their voices seemed to lighten the gloom.

"Jest 'bout fifteen yeahs an' six months ago," said Ike, with the greatest solemnity, adding quickly, "an' I don't tink de sun'll eber rise agin. It's done gone gin out. My, if we could see our faces 'bout dis yer time, do yeh know wot we'd find?"

"What, Ike?"

"Dat we've all growed up in de darkness, and dat we'z ole men."

"Me not feel like ole man," said Wah Shin.

"What do you feel like?" asked Sam, glad to hear them all speaking again.

"Me feel belly hungly," was the reply.

"Patience, patience," cried out Ulna, from the forward part of the raft, "God's sun is rising now."

"Where!" was the exclamation of all.

"In the east,"said the young Ute.

Not one of them could tell in what direction the east was, but all turned their heads.

Suddenly Ike called out:

"Oh, I see a light in de sky!"

At the same instant all saw it, high up and directly in front

The light looked like the glow of a wonderful fire opal, set in the inky blackness of the sky.

Brighter and brighter it grew each moment, till the reflected light penetrated the profound depths of the cañon.

It was the rising sun saluting the highest snow peaks of the mountains, a section of which was visible in front.

With the joy of the blind when the blessing of sight is restored, our friends watched the increasing light coming down from the sky.

Gradually the towering walls of the cañon became more distinct, till at length their far-off summits could be seen, with here and there a cedar clinging for dear life to the giddy ledges.

"If dis yar day is gwyne to be ez long ez de last night," said Ike, when he felt that the coming of the sun was not a false alarm, "why, I reckon we'll all be ole men afore it gits dark agin."

Even the dog gained courage by the coming of the day, and sitting up he began to bark in a way that proved his interest in the world was returning.

There was no means of telling how far they had been borne by the current during the long hours of that awful night, but as soon as it was light again Sam took the pole and resumed his position as helmsman.

As they were swept on he looked to the right and left in the hope of finding a place where they might make a landing.

They were wet, hungry and weary, but the coming sun revived their drooping spirits.

It was not till near noon that the precipitous walls expanded into an area a quarter of a mile in diameter, that looked, in its flooded state, like a subterranean lake.

Here the current was much slower, and with Ulna's help, Sam succeeded in guiding the raft to a ledge of sloping rocks, where it was made fast, and again the passengers carried the cargo on shore.

The sun shone on their landing place, which, being on the south bank of the river, Sam decided to explore thoroughly in the hope of finding a way out of the cañon, for he did not lose sight for a minute of his father's trying situation.

This expansion of the cañon walls was much greater than the one from which they had come the day before, and there were so many recesses and irregularities that getting out appeared to be an easy matter indeed.

They spread their wet blankets and clothing on the rocks, and they found enough drift-wood to make a fire, but all were so hungry that they did not wait for the fire before eating.

Wah Shin had some cooked food ready, and, although it had not been improved by its long soaking, hunger made it very palatable.

After the fire was started, Wah Shin and Ike, thoroughly exhausted, and it may be more weary in feeling because unburdened with the responsibility of the situation, lay down on the sun-heated rocks and were soon asleep.

"You must be tired also, Ulna. Lie down and I will look around and see if I can find a way out of this," said Sam, laying his hand on the handsome young Indian's shoulder.

"I will not say that I could not lie down and go to sleep at once," replied Ulna, "but if you are going to search I shall go with you. I know how you feel about your father, and that thought is always in my heart; so if you stay awake to work, I must do the same."

"Sam succeeded in guiding the raft to a ledge of sloping rocks."
(See page 65.)

The two youths shook hands, and after seeing that their rifles were in order and loaded they slung them over their shoulders and started off.

They clambered over huge masses of white sandstone rock that had fallen in from the sides of the cañon, like the ruin of a giant's stronghold, and at every step they could see by the drift-wood that the present flood had been preceded by others much higher.

Compared with the great pillars of stone scattered about them each was impressed with the idea that his companion must have shrunk, he looked in contrast with his surroundings so much smaller than usual.

After much searching and climbing they came to a great rift in the cañon wall that led up to the blue sky, and seemed to promise an outlet from these awful depths.

At the discovery Sam could not restrain a cry of joy, and even Ulna's usually impassive face was illuminated with the light of hope.

"I can see nothing to stop us!" said Sam, as with the activity of a mountain lion he sprang up the defile.

But it was three thousand feet to the top of the rift, and from their position they could not see all the obstacles that lay in their way.

But like the poet's Alpine climber, the motto was Excelsior!—higher up—and with stout hearts they faced the unknown path that promised access to the upper world and then to Hurley's Gulch.

They clambered up and on, the way becoming narrower and steeper at each step, while here and there their course was made difficult by huge bowlders that had fallen in from above.

After fully three hours hard work, and just when it seemed that a little more exertion would take them to the summit, the cleft came to an end in a precipice fully a hundred feet in height, though from the bottom it looked only like a step that a child might overcome.

Sam was so cast down by his discovery that he leaned against the side of the cliff and pressing his hands to his eyes, he groaned:

"Oh, my poor father, what will become of him! What will he think of my absence?"

"He will know that if you could you would come to him; and those who keep him and Hank Tims prisoners need not to be told about the flood. They will give us time to get back, I am sure they will give us time," said Ulna, and he took Sam's hand and pressed it affectionately.

They had made a bold attempt and failed, and now there was nothing left but to make their way back to the place where they had left the raft tied, and Ike and Wah Shin were sleeping on the rocks.

CHAPTER XI.

A TRYING SITUATION.

MR. WILLETT and Hank Tims were guarded by a number of the vigilantes, and with these men, who appeared to be rough but honest fellows, they talked about their trying situation.

It will be remembered that Frank Shirley and Badger spent money freely during that first rainy day in order to get the miners drunk, believing that while they were in that state they could be led to destroy the prisoners without even the appearance of a trial.

In addition to making two-thirds of the men drunk, Shirley poisoned their minds by telling them what a very bad man Mr. Willett had been in Detroit, and he intimated, in a way more powerful than a direct accusation, that he had poisoned his wife.

The result of all this was that by the evening of that rainy day a great mob, inflamed with liquor and driven into fury by lies, was shouting for the lives of Mr. Willett and his companion.

The guards not having been subjected to the influence of the bars were calm and determined to do what they believed to be their duty.

Soon after dark one of the guards, a tall, rugged ma

named Collins came into the tent, and, turning up the lamp that hung from the pole in the center, he said:

"I'm afraid, gents, we are goin' to have trouble."

"Trouble!" repeated Mr. Willett, as he rose from the blanket on which he had been lying. "I don't see how our trouble can be increased."

"I'll tell you how," said Collins, evidently very much excited. "You know those of us here at Hurley's Gulch that are in for doin' about what's right, want to give you gents a fair show."

"That is what I want to believe," said Mr. Willett.

"Well, I'm very much afeerd that things has took a change for the worst."

Collins hesitated, and Mr. Willett said:

"For the worse! What do you mean?"

"I mean that this man Frank Shirley, who says he's yer dead wife's cousin, has made most of the men crazy drunk, for as it's been stormin' and as the krik is up the boys couldn't work to-day. Then Shirley's give out that he knowed you in Detroit, and that you was a very bad man back there."

"If you men knew this Shirley as well as I do," said Mr. Willett, his brown cheeks flushing with indignation, "you would not believe him under oath. But what has this to do with my case? Have they not agreed to wait till my son comes here with the papers to prove I paid Edwards in full for his claim at Gold Cave Gulch?"

"Yes, they agreed to that when they was sober."

"But, surely, Mr. Collins, they do not think differently now," said Mr. Willett.

"I'm afeerd they do. Hark! don't you hear 'em a-hollerin' and yellin' and shootin' off their pistols?"

Mr. Willett and Hank Tims must have heard the noise even had their hearing been less acute, for every minute it came nearer and nearer.

"When men get drunk," said Hank, "they become brutes. But you are here to guard us, an' you are sober an' have yer judgment an' senses about you. Now, Mr. Collins, do you know what I'd advise?"

"What?" asked Collins, who seemed at a loss what to do under the trying circumstances.

"Either protect us till we've had a trial, or else give us back our rifles and pistols and let us protect ourselves. What do you say?"

"I want to stand by you," said Collins, "but before I can 'gree to anything I must see my friends."

He hurried out, and, blending with the yelling of the intoxicated mob, the prisoners could hear the low tones of men in earnest conversation just outside the tent.

"What do you think of the situation, Hank?" asked Mr. Willett, when they were again alone.

"I think it is mighty bad," was the reply.

"But you surely do not think those men will shoot us down in cold blood?"

"They've done such things before. If they was only sober they'd do near right as they know how, but they ain't. Just hear how they yell! Talk about Injuns an' savages, a drunken white man is meaner and more bloodthirsty than all of 'em put together. Ah! It'd be a heap sight better world if thar was never a drop of whisky in it," and Hank sighed and shook his head.

He had but just ceased speaking when the flap of the tent was again raised and Collins re-entered. This time he brought the rifles and pistols that had been taken from the prisoners.

"Here!" he said, "we've agreed not to let you be kilt without a show. But we may git you to a place where you'll be safe till the mob has a chance to cool down. Quick! put on these things and foller me."

Mr. Willett and Hank fastened on their belts, and when they had done so, Collins put out the lamp and led the way out of the tent.

It was very dark outside and the rain had been followed by a fierce gale.

"Hang on to my arms, so's we won't git parted," said Collins as he stepped between the two men whom he was gallantly determined to save from the fury of the mob.

They hurried on through the darkness, the yelling of the crowd gradually dying out behind them.

It seemed to Mr. Willett that they had walked several miles, and he was wondering how their guide could be certain of his way in the inky darkness, for from the time of starting he never hesitated for a moment, when Collins came to a halt and said:

"This is the place. Now foller behind me and be very keerful, for the path is steep and slippery, and if you should chance to lose your footin' you'd shoot into the creek whar the water's forty foot deep 'bout this time."

Bracing themselves they followed Collins down a steep

bank till they came to the very edge of the seething torrent, then up along the uneven shore they went for about a hundred yards and turned sharply to the right.

At length they found themselves standing before a rock and wondering what would happen next.

They were not long in doubt, for Collins lit a dark-lantern and its glance of golden light revealed an opening in the rock very much like the entrance to the old abode at Gold Cave Camp.

"This is whar me and Si Brill, my pardner, hold out," said Collins as he led the way into the cave.

The place was somewhat contracted, but it had two beds, a fire-place and cooking appliances, so that space was not a matter of any importance.

"I must thank you, my friend," said Mr. Willett with a great sense of relief, "and I hope to be able to prove to you before long that your kindness and courage have been exercised for innocent men."

"Yes," added Hank, "and for two men that would rather do a right, even if it put them out of the way, than to think a wrong that paid big."

"I'll stand by you," said Collins, "and you must stand by me, for if it was knowed I fotched you har, them fellers would make short work of me and Si Brill. Si's back at the tent and I must go and hunt him up. But what I was a goin' to say is, don't try to light out. Stay har till we can have a fair trial. You'll find lots of grub in this corral, and I don't want you to be hungry. When your son comes over from Gold Cave Camp, Mr. Willett, I'll fotch him to you at once. And now, good-night, for I won't be back again before sun-up."

"We certainly appreciate your kindness, Mr. Collins," said Mr. Willett as he took the sturdy miner's hand, "and I can assure you that Hank and I will remain here till you say we are free to leave."

"And if we get well out of this scrape an' you should chance to be in the same fix," said Hank, "you ken bet your last cent we'll stand by you as one good man should stand by another."

Putting out his lamp and warning them not to venture outside the cave till they saw him again, Collins scrambled out and made his way back to the tent in which the prisoners had been confined.

He found that the canvas had been torn down and slashed to pieces with knives in the hands of the furious mob.

The shouting and the occasional pistol shots told that the mob had gone back to the saloon, and while Collins was wondering whether he should go there or not, he was joined by his partner, Si Brill.

"What's up now, Si?" asked Collins.

"I'm afeerd we're in for it," was the reply.

"What do you mean?"

"The mob believes we run the prizners off——"

"They do, eh?"

"Yes, and they swear if they ain't brought back by daylight, you and me will have to fight for it."

"Well," said Collins slowly, "they ken have a fight."

CHAPTER XII.

THE VOYAGE IS RESUMED.

WHEN Sam Willett and Ulna returned to the camp they found Ike, Wah Shin and the dog lying on the rocks near the dying fire.

Although they had been sleeping for nearly five hours, it was with difficulty that Ike could be aroused, and when he did sit up and rub his eyes, he declared with laughable solemnity that he had only been asleep a few minutes.

"If you look at the sun I think you will see you are mistaken," said Sam, pointing to the west.

"Dat sun," said Ike, with the fine contempt of one who had lost all faith in the luminary that rules the day; "I don't got no use foh it. 'Tain't like the sun we uster know way back at Detroit. Wy, sometimes he gets up and hurries across the sky like a race-horse, an' sometimes he don't get up foh weeks an' weeks. He's foolin' us, dat's all I got to say." And Ike rose and yawned till he showed every tooth in his capacious mouth.

"I gottee heap muchee sleep, me no sleep mole foh twenty-one day," said Wah Shin, who seemed determined not to agree with Ike in this matter.

"If ebber I should get out of this yar scrape, an' I

should hab lots of money an' plenty ob time," said Ike with comical earnestness, "I'll go off to some place whar it ain't dark most all de time, an' I'll sleep in de sun foh weeks an' weeks an' weeks at a stretch, an' don't you forgit it."

As it was now about three o'clock in the afternoon Sam, after consulting with Ulna, and recalling their experience of the night before, decided not to launch their raft till the following morning.

Wishing more than ever that he was a bird, Ike went off with Wah Shin to gather fuel, and Sam and Ulna, both much exhausted, lay down to get a little much needed sleep.

When they closed their eyes the western sun was flooding the cañon with a river of golden glory, when they woke up "night had let her sable curtain down and pinned it with a star."

A great fire was blazing near by, and Ike and Wah Shin were preparing supper, while Maj sat licking his chops and eagerly watching the operations.

Sam had already divided the provisions, so that with care, "an' not eatin' nigh's much as they felt like," to use Ike's words, they could manage to live without much suffering for another week.

After supper Ike startled the company by saying:

"See heah, Mistah Sam, I'ze got an offer to make."

"What is it, Ike?"

Before proceeding Ike turned and pointed to the parcels containing their little stock of food.

"Ain't I de owner ob one-quarter ob dat grub?"

"You shall have your share, Ike; but why do you ask?" said Sam, who half guessed what was coming.

"I've eat my share for to-night."

"Yes, Ike."

"An' I still feel as holler as a drum," and Ike rolled his eyes and tightened his belt.

"You have had as much as the rest," said Sam.

"Oh, I ain't a complainin'; no one won't say, Mistah Sam, dat you don't tote fair, but heah's de pint I wants to git at——"

"Go on, Ike."

"You let me have all my share now."

"What would you do with it?"

"Do wif it!" echoed Ike. "Wy, I'd sit right down an' gib it all a inside passage. I'd a heap sight rudder hab one good, squar meal dan a hundred scrimpsy ones. Dar ain't no pleasure in stoppin' jest when yeh wants to keep right on eatin'."

"Nevertheless we must all do it, Ike. We are not eating for pleasure, but to keep alive till we get out of this place."

"Wa'al, if we ebber does git out, an' I can sit down before grub an' eat all I wants, dat grub will suffer—if I has any strent left," and Ike sat down and watched Maj with a hungry look that boded no good to that faithful creature.

Sam had often been surprised at Ulna's gentle manners and the excellent English he spoke; he seemed so little like the wild Indians he had read about that he was anxious to know something of his life, but from

feelings of delicacy he had never asked him about his past up to this time. By way of passing the time before setting the guard, he asked Ulna where he had learned English so well.

"In the Mission School at Taos," said Ulna. "My father, who was a brother of our chief, Uray, was killed in the Sierra Madre Mountains, by the Hill, or Arizona, Apaches, when I was a little child."

"And your mother?" suggested Sam.

"She could read and write, and she could speak Spanish and English as well as the language of her own people; all this she had learned in the school at Taos, to which place the good missionaries took her when she was a child; that was long before the white man crowded into this land."

"Is your mother living?"

"Yes, and my sister; she is a year older than I, and she is very good. Two years ago my mother, who still lived at Taos, married a white man—a Mexican. I did not like him and I ran away and joined the tribe. But I did not like the ways of our people, though I felt that their free life on the hills and along the great rivers was the only one to live. Yes, I have much of the white man's knowledge, and I am glad of it. Still, my heart has ever hungered for the free life of the Ute. No matter what befalls me, I do not complain; the Great Spirit rules and directs all," and as Ulna ceased speaking, he uncovered his head and raised his handsome, expressive face to the stars.

"I thank you for telling me this," said Sam, taking

the young Indian's hand and pressing it warmly, while he added: "It does not make me love you any the less or more, Ulna, but somehow I think that the more good people know of each other the warmer friends they become."

"Dem's my sentiments," said Ike, who looked as if he had been sleeping, though he must have been wide awake. "Foh instants, when I didn't know Mistah Sam, I didn't like him at all; but now dat I does know him better'n any one in de world, w'y as a consekence I likes him a heap sight more'n I does any one in de world."

Sam had been inclined to feel angry with Ike when he spoke in the way he did about dividing the food, but this little expression of genuine sentiment on the black boy's part quite touched his heart, and he showed his feeling by saying:

"Ah, Ike, you may have a hungry stomach, but it cannot be truthfully said that you haven't got a kindly heart."

"Bimeby, mebbe, I tell you sometings all 'bout me, Wah Shin," said the Chinaman, who felt that he must add something to the expressions of good-fellowship.

After a little further talk, in which they discussed the situation and vainly tried to guess where they were, Sam gave the order in which the guards should be called and handed his watch to Ike, whose turn came first, and lay down on the blankets, which were quite dry and comfortable by this time.

To prove that Ike was not in the least selfish, though his display of healthy-boy appetite might lead us to a

different belief, it is but just to him to say that when his two hours guard were up, he did not call Sam, whose turn it was next, and who appeared to be sleeping very soundly, but he stood the whole four hours on watch and then awoke Wah Shin, and, after whispering to him what he had done added:

"Mistah Sam's got the keer of all on his shoulders, an' he needs all de sleep he kin git. W'y, I ken sleep any time; he can't, so I sez, let's let him sleep his fill w'ile he's at it."

They were up again before daylight, and the allowance of food for breakfast made ready, a portion being set apart for Maj, for though the dog was not at all a useful member of the little band, indeed, his consumption of rations for one made him undesirable, yet Sam could not find it in his heart to put the faithful creature out of the way.

There was no need to discuss the course they should next take; there was only one avenue that held out the promise of escape, and that was the swift stream rushing by their resting place to an unknown landing.

By this time all hands had become quite expert in loading and unloading the raft, so that it did not take them long to get under way this morning, each one in his accustomed place and Maj crouching down on the blankets in the center.

The rope was untied, and, with the pole in his hand, Sam stood up behind, and again they were sweeping down on the red waters of this wonderful river.

As they drifted between the precipitous banks that

seemed to grow higher and higher with the passing of each bend, Sam recalled all he had ever heard or read about the mighty Colorado of the West and its wonderful cañon. He remembered that it was four hundred miles of continuous cañon wall from the point where the Green and Grand Rivers united to the Mormon settlement at Virgin River, where the cañon walls give place to a wide valley.

He shuddered but kept his thoughts to himself, for he wisely reasoned that no good could result from frightening his companions by a true picture of the dangers that lay before them.

For himself he believed that there must be some opening by which they could leave the cañon before traversing its length, and this hope was not darkened with the thought that such an avenue of escape, if used, might not better their condition.

They drifted on till the middle of the afternoon, passing many side cañons which it was impossible to enter, when they suddenly found their raft swept by a whirling current, that boiled about them like the waves of a storm-tossed sea.

They looked up, to find that the towering gray walls had broken into mighty pillars that rose for thousands of feet into the sky.

It was the junction of the Green and Grand Rivers, and the piled up, roaring and irresistible flood was caused by the coming together of the two currents.

The scene that presented itself at this point was indescribably sublime, and even the dangers of the situation

were forgotten for the moment in the awful grandeur of their surroundings.

Although Sam still stood bravely up, his pole was useless to control the movements of the raft, which was borne with the speed of a swallow's flight into the whirlpool, about which the waters circled and danced, as if celebrating their meeting in these wild depths.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHIRLED AWAY.

AS THE raft was being swept into the whirlpool, Ike and Wah Shin sent up a shriek of alarm that rose high above the roar of the waters, and Maj crouched down lower on the blankets and moaned piteously.

Ulna sat in his accustomed place. He did not make a movement, nor did the expression of his face change as they were being whirled to what seemed certain death.

As nothing could be done to avert the impending catastrophe, Sam uttered a prayer, drew in his pole to save himself from being swept off and then sat as calmly and stoically down as if he were a young brave.

There was a central vortex about which the waters swept with the speed of a mill-stream, and for this point—as if forced on by an irresistible power, the raft plunged.

It seemed like going down a hill on a sled. Once fairly under way there was nothing to stop it.

With one quick glance from the center of the whirlpool to the pillars piercing the sky, Sam closed his eyes expecting the next instant would be the last.

But instead of rushing down to death, he was called back to an interest in his surroundings by feeling a peculiarly soothing, swinging sensation in the raft.

He opened his eyes and looked about him, and to his unutterable surprise they were being swept about the mighty whirlpool, like a ball at the end of a string in a strong man's hand.

Nearer and nearer to the center, until it seemed that the fraction of a second must bring the fatal plunge, and then the raft would be suddenly flung to the outer edge of the whirlpool again.

"Golly!" exclaimed Ike, as he looked about him and winked very fast, "dis am curus."

"Too muchee, swing, swing!" cried Wah Shin, as the raft hung again on the edge of the vortex, only to be hurled a second time to the outer edge.

This swinging was at first a decidedly pleasant sensation, but soon it made the passengers on the raft giddy and then quite sick.

It was only by keeping their eyes shut that they could command their senses.

A half an hour of this whirling to the center and being thrown back to the edge continued, though it seemed much longer to the tortured occupants of the raft, and Sam spoke his thoughts rather than addressed any of his companions when he said:

"Will this go on forever?"

"It do look to me powahful-like's if we was a-gwine to sikle round dis yar place foheber an' eber, amen," said Ike.

Sam looked up again at the sky, and the crimson hue of the clouds told him that the sun would soon sink in the upper world and that darkness would soon come to add to their trials.

He felt that whether the raft was swallowed up or continued to swing in that giddy dance till morning would make but little difference to himself or his companions, for in either case death would come before morning.

His brave heart grew heavy, as if the darkness of descending night were falling on it.

He thought of his dead mother, thought of the imprisoned father, whom he had set out so heroically to save, and the death that threatened was only awful to him because he was to see his father nevermore.

While these thoughts were running through his mind he felt a different movement in the raft. This was followed by a cheer from Ike and Wah Shin and the loud barking of the dog.

Sam looked quickly up.

Joy! joy! In some inexplicable way the raft had been hurled so far beyond the circle of the whirlpool's power as to be caught by the current and carried into the Colorado, which here begins its journey under that name, for the Gulf of California.

Even Ulna was roused from his usual stoicism by the change. Pointing to the right, where in the twilight a low peninsula could be seen jutting into the river, he called to Sam:

"Let us steer for that point. I think we can make a landing there."

"All right," replied Sam with his habitual cheerfulness.

Ulna now took up his own pole, and after much

effort they succeeded in getting the raft to the low point, and here, without difficulty, they made a landing.

As there was neither tree nor rock to tie to they pulled the raft high up on the strip of beach, and then looked around, but without success, for the means to make a fire.

It was too dark to see ten feet away, so they sat on the rocks after making the discovery that what they supposed to be a peninsula was really an island.

But they made another discovery at the same time that was destined to affect their progress very seriously, and that was that one-half the provisions had in some way been pushed or slipped from the raft; but they were lost, and hunger, or rather, starvation was only a few days off.

They ate a little of their remaining provisions and then spread the blankets on the low, damp ground.

Sam Willett had a military idea of the value of discipline. Having begun with having guards at night, he determined to keep it up till the end.

The wisdom of this precaution was shown before another sun came to banish the shadows.

About an hour before daylight Ulna, who was then watching, discovered that the flood was rising around them, and hastily awoke his companions.

They sprang up to find the water roaring about them, and Sam, holding the raft to keep it from floating off, ordered the others to bundle up the blankets and get all the things on board.

As soon as this was done they pushed the raft into

deeper water, got on board and were at once swept away by the current.

Such trials would have crushed the spirits of any but the bravest, and with a less resolute leader than Sam, despair would have made the others indifferent to their surroundings.

While it was yet as dark as midnight in the cañon, they could look up and see pink streaks in the far-off sky that told them the light of another day was again flushing the upper world.

But the sun only looked into this gloomy abyss for one short hour in the twenty-four, and then left it to the gathering shadows and impenetrable night.

It was ten o'clock by Sam's watch when they found a ledge of rocks on which they could make a landing.

This haven was discovered none too soon, for the severe straining the raft had had in the whirlpool had loosened the cords that held the logs and they threatened to come apart and let all into the water.

The remaining food was very much soaked, but their appetites were keen enough to eat the whole of it just as it was.

Two more days would see all of their provisions gone, and, realizing this fact, Sam proposed dividing what was left so as to last over three days, but against this arrangement Ike and Wah Shin entered a protest.

"Now, Mistah Sam," said Ike, "I ain't got nigh so much sinse as you has, but it'd been a heap sight bettah it you jest took my edvice."

"Your advice about what, Ike?" asked Sam.

"'Bout dat grub."

"What about it?"

"I proposed, night afore last, we should all go in and eat all we could—now, didn't I?"

"I believe, Ike, you did say something like that."

"An' you said 'no;' so w'at's the consekence?"

"The consequence is, Ike, that you obeyed me then, and I expect you to obey me still," said Sam firmly.

"Yes; an' I'll keep on obeyin' you till I die, but har's de pint," and Ike spread out his hand and looked at the palm as if he were reading. "If we'd hab eat a lot more ob dat grub, den dar wouldn't have been so much lost. Wouldn't it be a heap sight better if we had dat stuff inside ob us dan at de bottom ob dat ar whirlpole?"

"We did everything for the best, Ike, and therefore we should not blame ourselves," said Sam.

"I no tinkee dat glub's in watel," said Wah Shin.

"Whar is it, den?" asked Ike.

"I tink Maj he lookee muchee fat. Him no so hungly like befole; mebbe him eatee glub."

The object of this awful accusation sat near by eyeing the little stock of provisions as if he could dispose of the lot without feeling any great discomfort.

"No," said Ulna, who usually listened to these conversations without taking part in them; "the dog did not eat that food."

"W'y you tinkee no?" asked Wah Shin.

"Because the bag in which the food was placed is gone, and the dog could not have eaten that."

"Me no so shule bout lat," said Wah Shin. "W'en dog him heap hungly him eat bag too."

Clearly Ike and Wah Shin had formed a conspiracy against the dog, and this only confirmed Sam in his attachment to the poor brute, though more than once he wished that he was in some other place.

Sam and Ulna at once set about repairing the raft, and while they were engaged in this work Ike showed that he had unbounded faith in his young master's knowledge by asking these questions:

"Mistah Sam, w'at you tink bout dis time?"

"Nothing, Ike," was the reply.

"Know 'bout whar we is?"

"I do not."

"Know whar we'z goin'?"

"No."

"Nor whin we'll git dar?"

"No."

"Eber heah ob sich a fix?"

"Never."

"If we gits out ob dis yeh won't neber want to try anudder sich scrape, I reckon?"

"No."

"Ye've had enough?"

"Yes."

"So has I, but dar's no use a gibbin' up so, Mistah Brown!" and then with a sudden change of manner that startled all hands, the dog included, Ike sang out in a rich tenor voice.

"Oh fust was made de sun,
An' den was made de sky,
An' den dey made de earf
An' hung it up to dry,
An' den de made de star, outer yalla gals' eyes
Foh to gib a little light
W'en de sun don't rise."

CHAPTER XIV.

ORDER AND DISORDER.

THE STORM died out over Hurley's Gulch, and except for the high current in the creek there was nothing to indicate that the land had been recently deluged.

The bluest of cloudless skies bent over the landscape; the verdureless rocks glistened in the light of the sun, as if they had recently been subjected to a furnace heat instead of being drenched by a flood.

The lines of the Sierra Madre Mountains, to the east, were so clear and sharply defined that they seemed to be but a short walk away instead of being seventy miles.

Only the ragged tents and dilapidated cabins showed the effects of the storm; perhaps we should include the crowd of red-eyed miners, who, with the evidences of unbridled dissipation on their faces, crowded about the principal saloon.

Frank Shirley and Badger were disappointed in the work they had planned for the night before.

They had spent much money and time in working the mob up to a pitch of unreasoning and brutal frenzy, and yet nothing had been done.

"'Tain't the boys' fault," said Badger, as on the

following morning he and Frank Shirley walked along the banks of the creek.

"Whose fault is it, then?" asked Shirley, sulkily.

"Why, it's the fault of them other two fellers—Collins and Brill—that was sot to guard the prizners; they ain't no good; they've gone clar back on us," said Badger, with an angry light in his single eye.

"Well, I left the management to you, and I don't understand why you failed," said Shirley, who evidently felt that the man he had employed to do his vile work was not keeping his part of the contract.

"If a man don't win first time is he agoin' to give up and never try again?" and Badger answered his own question by adding: "Not if he's got the right kind of stuff in him."

"But what are we to do next? You see, I must have this man out of the way. If he lives then I have no show to get the fortune."

"I thought it all depended on the boy's livin'."

"So it does, but you know our plan."

"I do that, and I'm goin' to stick to it. Don't lose patience; this yar world wasn't made in a day. Time is allers well-spent on a big job."

By this time they had come in their walk to the tent in which the prisoners were confined the night before.

The tent, as has been said, lay torn on the ground, but the knives of the mob and not the storm had made the rents.

Collins and Brill, both seemingly very angry, were talking to a lot of the miners when Badger pushed through the crowd and said:

"You two is purty guards."

"We didn't ask your opinion," said Brill, hotly.

"Still I feel like givin' it. Whar's the prizners?"

"They are safe," said Collins.

"Safe whar?"

"In my charge."

"But whar have you hid 'em?"

"Where a lot of drunken ruffians can do them no harm till they have had a fair trial," said Brill.

"Drunken ruffians!" retorted Badger, with a cool effrontery that won the admiration of his employer, "we ain't murderers at any rate. And if we did want to do for them two, that you've hid away in yer dugout, as I believe, it was to prevent others from doin' like 'em. When you are a savin' of them, you'd orter think of poor Tom Edwards, as is dead and buried."

"I started out to see that them two men had a fair trial," said Collins, stoutly, "and I'm goin' to do it. We've sent other messengers for that boy with the paper, and if he don't show up with it, why then, I'll be in for trial. But let me warn you fellers that there's men in this camp that means to see fair play, and if you don't like our way of doin' business, Badger, just step to one side and say so to me, and I'll give you all the chance you want to larn who's best man."

As Collins spoke he laid his hand on the stock of his pistol and there was a set to his firm lips and a light in his keen gray eyes that there was no mistaking.

Like all of his class, Badger was at heart a very great coward, and he proved it now.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, in a voice that trembled perceptibly, "I don't want to quar'l with you. I'm in for doin' what's right. But I tell you this, Collins, and you mark my words, that boy of Willett's ain't agoin' to show up in this camp with no paper."

"We'll see about that," said Collins.

"I'm willin' to bet on it," said Badger.

"Have you got money to bet?"

"Yes, I have."

"Then my advise to you, Badger, is to start off and pay your debts instead of gambling with other people's money," and with this caustic shot, Collins turned on his heel and walked away with his partner, Brill.

They had gone about fifty yards when Badger shouted after them:

"See har, Collins!"

"What is it?" asked Collins!" looking over his shoulder.

"How long are we to wait for the trial?"

"I told you till Mr. Willett's son comes."

"A day?"

"On account of the floods it may take three days."

"Say three days then."

"Wa'al, if it will make you fellers easier, I'll say three days!"

"And then the trial?"

"Yes."

"Boy or no boy?"

"Boy or no boy," replied Collins.

"And if they're found guilty?"

"Then me an' Brill will be in for punishin them as much as any man in your gang. Meantime it might be better if you fellers shut down on drinkin'."

With this very sensible opinion Collins and Brill, each active and tall and with a rifle at his back, started off in the direction of their dugout.

They told Mr. Willett and Hank Tims what had happened, and Brill added:

"You're purty safe for three days, Mr. Willett, yet if I was you I don't think I'd leave this place or run the risk of meeting any of the gang drunk."

These miners, like all brave fellows, were gentle and generous to the two men whom they took pains to treat as guests, so that they might forget that they were prisoners.

The day following the events just narrated the man who had been sent by the vigilantes to Gold Cave Camp to hurry up Sam Willett with the all-important paper, came back on a weary horse, bringing with him a very startling report.

The instant he dismounted before the canvas hotel he was greeted from all sides by queries like these:

"Got back, Ned?"

"Wot's the news?"

"Whar's the boy?"

"Wouldn't he come?"

"You found thar wasn't any paper to fetch?"

When the messenger had recovered his breath and the silence abated, he replied to all these questions in one sentence:

"Thar wasn't no one at the caves!"

"No one!" shouted a number.

"Not a livin' soul."

"Whar had they gone?" asked Badger.

"The flood must have drowned 'em all out," said the messenger.

"Did it rise as high as the caves?" as'.ed one.

"Yes; clear up to the top."

"But they mout have got off afore the flood riz?" said Badger.

"Wa'al," was the reply, "if they did git off, they must have gone inter hidin', for I sarched and sarched, and didn't see hair nor hide, nor sign nor trace of 'em."

This news startled every one, but it brought intense pleasure to two.

As soon as Frank Shirley and Badger could go off without attracting attention, they withdrew from the crowd, and the former asked:

"What do you think of the news, Badger?"

"Couldn't be better," said Badger.

"Think the boy's drowned?"

"He must be."

"But might he not have escaped?"

"How?"

"In a boat or on a raft."

"Wa'al," laughed Badger, "they didn't have no boat, and if they tried a raft, why that'd be the same as committin' suicide."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I've knowed of men as got into the

great cañon of the Colorado, but no one knows of any that came out on a raft. The boy's dead as a door nail by this time, and you're a rich man," said Badger, reaching out his hand.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PROVISIONS ALL GONE.

WHEN THE raft was repaired, the blankets, arms, and little stock of food were put on board and securely fastened, each one took his accustomed place, with Maj in the middle, and the voyage was resumed.

How far they had come, Sam had no means of telling, he only knew to his sorrow that he was being borne further and further away from his father.

Without this awful anxiety on his mind, the situation would have been sufficient to shake the nerves and courage of a strong man.

The brave youth felt that he was not only battling in these depths for his own life, but for the lives of those whom fate had thrown with him on this most thrilling voyage.

He fully realized the situation, and the fortitude with which he faced it redounds the more to his credit.

They were on a shaky raft at the bottom of the mightiest gorge in all the world.

Even if they could reach the top, they would find themselves in the midst of an arid, trackless desert, cut up by other cañons, across which naught but the mountain eagle could pass in safety.

The hunger, ever gnawing at his vitals, kept before him the fact that their provisions were nearly out.

If by dying, Sam could save his beloved father and return to safety his companions in these trials, he would not have hesitated about facing death; but as it was, he determined to do his full duty while his strength lasted, though no eye but God's appreciated the effort he was putting forth.

The cañon through which they were now passing, had the highest walls they had yet seen. For more than a mile their glistening gray sides shot up to the thin belt of dark blue sky, their summits crowned with pinnacles that in comparison would dwarf the highest and noblest structure ever built by human hands.

As if resting after their mad dance in the whirlpool, the waters flowed calmly and silently down, yet with a speed that told Sam they were moving at the rate of about four miles an hour.

The most wonderful thing about these depths was the dim twilight, and long before the sun went down in the upper world, the stars were visible from the bottom of the cañon.

As night approached the passengers scanned the shores eagerly, and looked ahead to every bend in the tortuous river, hoping they might be able to find a strip of shore or a ledge of rocks on which to make a landing, but in vain.

"It don't look's if dar was any more shoah," said Ike, in a loud, frightened tone, that echoed from rock to rock for nearly a minute after he had spoken.

"Not within sight," said Sam, with affected cheerfulness.

"Den wat's we to do?"

"We must keep on."

"On de raft?"

"The only chance is between that and the water."

"Dat's so," said Ike, solemnly.

"Too muchee watel, too lillee glub; no likee dis fix belly muchee," said Wah Shin.

"You must try and rest as best you can," said Sam. Ulna and I will take turns in steering the raft."

"All night, Mistah Sam?"

"Yes, Ike, all night."

"Den you done lost faith in dis chile?"

"I have not. Why do you ask?"

"Coz, Mistah Sam, I ain't agoin' to sleep while you weah yorself out. I may be purty mean, but I ain't nigh so mean as dat. I ken steer in de dark as well as de next man, an' I'm agoin' fer to try, if so be you don't objeck."

"Me, too; allee same like Ike. Me no steels so well likee me cookee, but I tly, too," said Wah Shin.

"I am glad to see, boys," said Sam, feeling stronger for the spirit shown by his two most dependent companions, "that you are willing to do your part. If we come out all right, as I believe we shall, it will be because we never felt like giving up."

"Dem's my sentiments," said Ike, heartily.

"Me say allee same likee dat," joined in Wah Shin, who showed that he was coming out strong as their trials increased.

Ulna spoke not a word, but in the dim and fading light his dark face glowed with a pride and pleasure more eloquent in its expression than words.

To show that he appreciated their efforts, and with the belief that it would be better for all, if each was made to feel that he had an important share of the responsibility on his shoulders, Sam decided that they should take turns in steering during the night, in the same order that they would if on guard.

These arrangements were hardly completed when the impenetrable darkness, to which no mortal with eyes could ever grow accustomed, came down on the cañon.

Sam had matches in a water-proof case, and with the help of these and his watch they were enabled to mark the hours during that long, dreary night.

During the watches of heavy, painful darkness, the raft swept swiftly and silently on, meeting with no mishap, but giving to its occupants the impression that they were falling down, down through the depths of a rayless and fathomless space.

When it became light enough to see the next morning, Sam noticed that all his companions looked older, and he reasoned that this was due to hunger, mental anxiety and want of sleep.

Even in the days of plenty, Ike was always ready to eat, and, as we have seen, the desire for more food was ever on his mind, from the hour when Sam thought it prudent to limit the rations.

From the moment it was light enough to see he kept his eyes fastened on the little bag containing their

remaining stock of provisions. It was evident, from the expression of his mouth, that he was trying to restrain his feelings, but unable to resist, he at length exclaimed:

"See heah, Mistah Sam!"

"What is it, Ike?" asked Sam, who already guessed what was coming.

"How does yeh feel 'bout dis time?"

"Pretty well, Ike; how are you?"

"I'ze mighty holler!" groaned Ike, and he pressed his hand over his belt and bent himself forward in a most comical way.

"Hungry, Ike?"

"Hungry!" repeated Ike, "dat ar' word don't nigh begin foh to 'spress jest how I feel."

"Cheer up, Ike; we'll find a landing-place presently, and then we'll have something hot."

"W'en a feller's as holler an' hungry as I am, he ain't so mighty partickler whedder de grub's hot or cole. De question wif him is, is dar enough to fill up all de emptiness."

"Very true, Ike——"

Sam's sentence was cut short by an exclamation from Ulna, who had risen to his feet and was pointing to a line of shore on the left, where grew a cluster of stunted bushes.

They succeeded in getting the raft to this point and made a landing without any difficulty.

Here they found a great quantity of driftwood, and Wah Shin and Ike started a fire while Sam and Ulna, with an eye to the future, selected some stout pieces of timber with which to strengthen their raft.

"Don't you t'ink," asked Ike as he pointed to their little stock of food, "dat dar ain't no use in makin' two bites ob a cherry?"

"Why do you ask that, Ike?"

"Coz, dar ain't more'n nuff grub dar foh one right-down, honest, squar meal, an' if us was to eat it, we'd all feel a heap sight bettah."

"But the future, Ike?"

"Wa'al, sah, I ain't hungry in de futah; Ize hungry right jest now at dis bressed minute."

"Me feel allee same like dat," said Wah Shin.

As this was exactly how Sam and the uncomplaining Ulna felt, the former gave orders to warm up all the food and divide it into five shares, one of which was to be for Maj.

They had a good supply of coffee left and a few pounds of bread with a like quantity of meat.

We shall not attempt to describe that feast. Only those who have long endured the pangs of hunger can appreciate it.

Each one rose from the banquet much relieved and refreshed, and in their enjoyment of the present they quite lost sight of the fact that their last particle of food was gone.

CHAPTER XVI.

DANGER AHEAD.

AFTER their last hearty meal, which finished up th provisions, Sam Willett and his friends felt better, stronger and warmer than they had since the beginning of this wonderful voyage.

It is one of the blessings and charms of youth that while it enjoys the present and anticipates the happiness of the future, it steadily ignores all thoughts of coming afflictions.

Ike was boisterous in his hilarity; he danced about the fire, as if "the squar meal" had had an intoxicating effect on him; and, at length, unable to restrain himself, he burst into the following snatch from an old plantation song:

"Oh! don't you know Miss Dinah Crane,
She's 'gwine to be married;
Glad am I, an' dat's a fac,
For berry long she's tarried.

"So fotch along de wine an' de hoe cake too,
De gumbo an' de cream,
An' don't fergit de weddin' cake
On wich we darkies dream!

"For we will larf an' sing all day,
Hooraw, hooraw, hooraw!
An' on de banjo sweetly play
With a zip, yaw, yaw—yaw, yaw!"

Even Ulna smiled at this performance, and Maj chased his tail and barked till the cañon walls rang with the echoes.

The strip of shore, on which they were encamped, extended from their landing place for some distance down the river, so before launching the raft again, Sam thought it would be well for Ulna and himself to make an examination as far as they could do so on foot.

Taking their rifles, which were loaded with metallic cartridges that the water could not injure, they started off, first telling Ike and Wah Shin to take advantage of their absence to get some sleep.

They walked and clambered along the shore for about half a mile, when there came to their ears a hoarse, deep, monotonous roar.

"What is that?" asked Sam, coming to a sudden halt and laying his hand on Ulna's arm.

"I don't know," was the quiet reply.

"From what direction does the sound come?"

"From down the river."

"It must be the water?"

"There is nothing else to make a noise down here."

"I once heard the roar of the great fall at Niagara, and that brings it to my mind. Let us move on," said Sam.

Again they resumed their journey.

At times they were forced to creep along the edge, knee deep in water, but they did not mind this.

After going about three hundred yards further down, they came to an irregular rock, up whose sides they

climbed in the hope of getting a better view of the river below.

They were not disappointed in their purpose, but the prospect that met their gaze was well calculated to dismay the stoutest heart.

Their vision was limited by a bend in the river a quarter of a mile below, but between this and the rock on which they stood, the water was white with foam as it roared and tumbled over a series of rapids, in the midst of which black rocks appeared like the heads of monstrous creatures.

This sight was so appalling that neither Sam nor Ulna could utter a word for some seconds, but stood looking from the maddened waters into each other's frightened face.

Sam was the first to speak:

"Oh, Ulna, that is awful!"

"Bad," was the laconic reply.

"What are we to do?"

"I cannot tell."

"We can't go back the way we came?"

"No," said Ulna, and he emphasized this opinion by a vigorous shake of the head.

"We can't get out by climbing up the walls?"

"I wish we could," said Ulna.

"Then," continued Sam, "there are only two courses open to us."

"Only two."

"One is to try and go down the rapids on the raft."

"And the other," added Ulna, "is to remain where the raft now is and starve to death."

"And have you a choice, Ulna."

"Yes, I have."

"What is it?"

"If I am to die, I want to die resisting."

"Then you are for trying the rapids?"

"I am; but I shall do as you say."

"I say 'go on.'"

Sam reached out and took Ulna's hand, and so they stood for some minutes looking at the frightful rapids which they had decided to face.

It was now about noon, there was fully five hours of daylight left, and they decided to avail themselves of it to test the rapids.

Sam reasoned that the thing had to be done, and the sooner the experiment was made the better, and in addition to this he knew that there was no more food left, and that from this time on himself and his companions would grow weaker and weaker for the effort.

They turned to walk back, Sam clambering along the giddy ledge of the rock which rose straight up from the water. He was a few yards in advance of Ulna, for whose immediate safety he had no fear, when he was brought to a sudden stand, and his heart stopped beating, and the cold sweat came out on his forehead at hearing a short, quick cry of alarm behind him.

The cry was followed by a splash, and turning, Sam saw that Ulna had fallen from the rock into the fierce current that roared and foamed above its base.

Sam threw aside his rifle and sprang back to the rescue of the young Indian, but before he had gone ten

feet Ulna was fifty yards away, bravely battling with the maddened waters, above whose roar came the words:

"God bless you! Farewell!"

Sam stood petrified with horror.

To plunge into the water and attempt to help Ulna in that way would be madness.

Even as Sam watched he could see the brave face becoming more and more indistinct as it rose and fell on the surges, and then with a wave of the arm vanished out of sight behind the distant bend of the river.

Overcome with his emotions, Sam sat down on the rock, and pressing his hand to his eyes, he cried as if his heart was breaking.

It was not for himself he grieved, nor would it be just to say that these tears were an evidence of weakness in the character of our brave young friend.

He loved the handsome Indian youth, as he might have loved a brother; but this awful loss came with the memory of his other trials, so that his emotion was a proof of his loyal heart and gentle nature.

The man or boy who is incapable of tears, it is safe to say, is also incapable of a noble feeling.

Believing that Ulna had gone down the mad river to his death, Sam, as he sat there, recalled that he owed a duty to the living.

Slinging his rifle on his back again, he retraced his steps to camp.

He found Ike, Wah Shin and the dog, all sleeping by the fire as peacefully as if they were on downy beds in the midst of civilization.

Maj leaped up barking with joy and began to fawn on his young master.

This awoke Ike and Wah Shin, the former of whom declared as usual that he had only just closed his eyes, "an' hadn't been asleep at all."

"We must make ready to start at once," said Sam. "Get the things on board and tie them securely."

"All right, sah," said Ike, and he went to work with the energy of one who had dined abundantly and slept well.

"Ulna, whele him go?" asked Wah Shin, stopping in the midst of loading the raft and looking about.

"He has gone down the river," said Sam, and his sad face told the Mongolian that something serious had happened.

"Him no gone gettee dlownded," gasped Wah Shin, and his eyes grew more oblique with alarm.

"Drownded!" cried Ike. "Why, Ulna kin swim like a whole flock of ducks in a mill pond."

"The river is very rough ahead," said Sam, "and after Ulna fell into the rapids he could not get back."

"An' whar did he go to?" asked Ike.

"Down the river."

"To de bottom?"

"I don't know."

"Golly!" exclaimed Ike, "if de ribber's as rough as dat, den we'd bettah stay whar we is."

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. WILLETT LEARNS THE NEWS.

COLLINS, and his partner, Brill, were at heart as tender as they were brave.

They reasoned that Mr. Willett should know the news the messenger brought back from Gold Cave Camp, yet neither felt like conveying it to the unhappy man.

"Somebody's got to tell him," said Brill, to his partner, "and as you've got the best gift of gab, Collins, I reckon you're the feller to do it."

"If it comes down whar I've got to speak my mind and tell a sneakin' feller jest what I think of him," replied Collins, "I ain't slow, and I find I'm flush of words 'bout that time, but tellin' a man his son's dead, and that that 'ar paper he sent for to save his own life, ain't agoin to be perduced, why, that's an entirely different matter, and I'd a sight rather contract out the job to some chap as don't mind sich things."

"See har, pard, I've got an idear."

"Let's have it," said Collins, much relieved.

"I think we'd better do this kinder by slow degrees like. What do you say?"

"Why, I say, Brill, ole feller, I don't catch on to the drift of your ore bed," said Collins.

"I mean through Hank Tims."

"What about him?"

"We must get him to one side, kinder."

"And what then?"

"Why then we must up and tell him the hull story."

"I see yer pint, Brill."

"And then," continued Brill, "he can give it to Mr. Willett, and that'll kinder let us out of the scrape."

In token of his approval of this very excellent plan, Collins shook hands with his partner, and then Hank Tims was called outside of the dugout.

The partners were still in doubt as to which of them should tell the story, and noticing that they stood looking at each other Hank asked:

"Is there any fresh trouble up, pards?"

"Wa'al, yes, kinder," said Collins, taking upon himself the painful duties of spokesman.

"Let's have it," said Hank, stoutly. "Neither me nor Mr. Willett is skeered to hear the worst."

"Jest so," said Collins, "and so we thought we'd better give you the news and let you break it to him."

"What news?" asked Hank.

"Why the news that's come from Gold Cave Camp."

"Wa'all, let's have it."

"You know, Hank, we sent a messenger to Gold Cave Camp when we found the storm was onto us, and Mr. Willett's son hadn't showed up with that paper."

"Yes, I heard of that, Collins."

"Wa'al, the man's back——"

"And the boy—Sam Willett?" cried Hank.

"Couldn't be found," stammered Collins.

"Why not?"

"He wasn't thar."

"No," added Brill, "he wasn't no whar in sight."

"And the other folks, the black boy, the Chinee and the young Ute, Ulna, what came here with me an Mr. Willett and went back again when we was took prizners?"

"No one knows; they wasn't in sight."

"Drownded out!" gasped Hank.

"No, the folks think they tried to git away by swimmin' or making a raft," said Collins.

"They might as well try to fly. Ah, this is bad news; mighty bad news. I'd rather die mysel', and I know Mr. Willett would rather die a thousand times over than to lose that boy. Did you ever see young Sam Willett, gents?"

The partners shook their heads and said they never had seen young Sam Willett.

"Wa'al," continued Hank, with a sob in his voice, "he wasn't what you and me mout think a full-growed man, but never a braver nor a handsomer lad ever crossed them Sierras off thar to the east. He was a gentleman, young Sam was, from the ground up; he couldn't think anything mean, much less do it. Ah, why should men like you, and me, and others be left and him be took? I don't see how I can bring mysel' to tell his father, for he was all Mr. Willett had left, and he won't keer any more for life when he hears this."

"It's mighty tough on the old man," coughed Brill, "not to mention his other troubles; but as he's got to

know it sooner or later, my pard and me thought you'd better tell him."

"Wa'al, if I must I 'spose I must; but I tell you what, boys, I'd jest as soon you'd order me out to be shot. In fact I'd a heap sight rather be shot, if I was only sure that my dyin' would bring back young Sam Willett to life."

Brushing his sleeve across his eyes, Hank turned away to hide his feelings, and the partners went silently back to the cluster of tents and buildings that was known as "the camp."

We have already seen something of the love that existed between Mr. Willett and his son.

Apart from the affection natural to their relationship, these two were still more strongly attached to each other by the fact that they were alone in the world and the exclusive object of each other's most profound affections.

We shall not attempt to describe the manner in which Hank Tims communicated the news to the already much afflicted father, but it should be said that he acquitted himself with a tenderness hardly to be expected from one of his rough exterior and rude life.

There are blows so crushing to the human heart that they fall without being followed by a sign of pain or a cry of agony.

The sting of a bee will call out a shout from the strongest man, but the bullet that taps the fountain of life is received with ashy but silent lips.

All the color left Mr. Willett's face, and he fell back on the blankets on which he had been sitting.

He looked as if he were dying, and Hank, to redress

the effects of the blow he had been forced to deal, sprang forward, and putting his arms about Mr. Willett's shoulder, he said, though he had not the slightest faith in his own words:

"Thar ain't no doubt in my mind but the boys made a raft. Sam was sharp, and thar was lots of timber to do it."

"But that would only be going to death," said Mr. Willett faintly and slowly.

"Oh, not by a long odds. Thar's lots and lots of places lower down whar they might get out easy. Now, let's jest have patience; thar ain't nothin' like a good stock of patience. Why, it wouldn't s'prise me not a bit if I was to see Sam and the hull caboodle of 'em walk into the door of this dugout this blessed minute," and Hank fixed his eyes steadily on the opening, as if he were quite prepared for this phenomenon.

Leaving Hank Tims to fan the faint ray of hope he had kindled in the afflicted father's heart, let us give a few minutes to reporting the conduct of the two men who were the authors of all this trouble.

There were some very bad men at Hurley's Gulch, as there are bad men in any gathering the world over, but in justice it should be said that a majority aimed to do as near right as they knew how.

Men's ideas of right and wrong vary with their training and their natural abilities to weigh evidence and comprehend truth. But even those men who are rude in their bearing, or even vicious in their lives, have their hearts touched by a death that brings great sorrow to some fond, loving heart.

So when the people at Hurley's Gulch began to think over Mr. Willett's loss, they forgot for the time the grave offence with which he was charged, and expressed themselves as very sorry for the death of his boy.

This change of feeling did not escape the ever wide-awake observation of Frank Shirley.

He was a pretty good judge of human nature, and so he thought it wiser not to say anything at this time. Indeed, he played his part so well that he expressed to the crowd, whom he kept attached to him by frequent treating, that he was very sorry for young Sam Willett's loss.

"He was a cousin of mine," sighed Shirley, "and not a bit like his father."

How could the people know that the death of Sam Willett was the one object that brought Shirley to this land, and how could they know that the life of the noble youth was the one thing that stood between this fellow and a large fortune.

"I tell you," Mr. Shirley," said Badger to his employer the day after the reception of the news from Gold Cave Camp, "you're a keen one. Oh, you ken play it fine—finer'n any one I ever seed."

"Do you think so, Badger?" said Shirley, flattered by this compliment to his talent for crime.

"Yes, I do. In a day or two the boys'll forgit all about the death of young Willett. Then you ken swing in on the murder of Tom Edwards again, and make them do jest as you please."

"Well, I'll try," replied the jubilant Shirley.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN THE RAPIDS.

THE BRAVEST soldier, no matter how cool his bearing, feels a sense of awe and dread when the rattle of rifles along the skirmish line tells him that the murderous battle has begun.

If there be men who never felt fear under such nerve-trying circumstances, then they certainly deserve no credit, for true courage consists in the determination to face a danger while fully comprehending its awful possibilities.

Sam Willett wisely decided not to picture to Ike and Wah Shin the dangers that lay before them; but while doing this he did not attempt to hide from himself the fact that within a few hours himself and his faithful companions might be the dead playthings of the wild waters.

As calmly and sternly as the cavalry leader wheels his battalions into line in front of the murderous artillery which he intends to charge, Sam Willett made his preparations for the passage of the rapids.

He strengthened the raft and fastened to it their arms and blankets, and then to prevent their being washed off, or lost if they fell overboard, he insisted that each should tie a rope about his waist, the other end being fastened to the logs.

It was not until the last precautions against the danger that lay ahead were proposed that Ike began to feel greatly alarmed.

"Golly, Mistah Sam," he said, with trembling lips, hitchin ob oursels to dese yar logs wif ropes looks to me kinder skittish."

"I hope they may not be needed," said Sam, as he made ready to push the raft off.

"You seed dem currents down de ribber?"

"I did."

"Pooty ugly, ain't dey?"

"We must pass them."

"'Twas dem as drownded Ulna?"

"He fell from a rock into the river."

"Den if he couldn't swim back, dem currents must be mighty bad."

"No can stay hele; no can backee go; den wat we do; allee same we mustee glong down ribbel," said Wah Shin, who seemed to have no trouble in taking in the situation.

"Wa'al," said Ike, desperately, "I reckon de job's got to be did. I don't want to be drowned way down har, when no one won't neber heah ob me agin, an' moah 'ticklah, Mistah Sam, I doesn't want you to die, but if dat be de good Lor's will, den I says amen, an' goes ahead."

Sam at first thought that he would tie Maj to the raft, but as the animal had not the reason to avail himself of this advantage, he decided to let him take his chances if he should be washed off.

"Now, I am about to push off," said Sam, standing at the stern with the pole in his hand, "and if we get into danger I want you both to keep cool and do as I say. Don't yell out, or try to hang on to each other, if the raft should go to pieces."

Ike and Wah Shin promised to do as they were told, and then with a mental prayer to Heaven to guide and protect him, Sam set one end of the pole against the bank and pushed the raft into the current.

"Dis don't seem so powahful bad," said Ike, as he looked ahead and saw a smooth expanse extending for nearly a half mile in front.

"Not so bad, Ike," said Sam, his eyes fixed on the bend, beyond which he knew the dreaded rapids rolled.

As they drifted on he could not help recalling the mighty falls of Niagara which he had visited with his father a few years before.

He remembered that a few miles above the falls the majestic river flowed on grandly and swiftly, without a ripple to break its glassy surface, or a murmur to suggest the frightful plunge it was soon to take. Then came the roaring rapids and the thundering fall.

What if these rapids ended in the same way?

This thought had just flashed through his mind, when the raft shot past the rock from which Ulna had fallen, and the next instant it swung round the bend, and the thunder of the waters was heard and the seething white waves came to view.

Every stick of timber in the raft groaned, as if it were a sentient being, trembling at its coming destruction.

Ike and Wah Shin fell flat on the logs and clung to them with all their might, not daring to look at the prospect ahead.

Even Sam dropped on his knees and gazed steadily in front, while the dog crept towards him, and, with a plaintive whine, thrust his nose into his master's breast.

Sam soon discovered that it would not only be useless, but absolutely dangerous to attempt to steer the raft, so he hauled in the pole and with his hands clung to the logs on either side.

The speed at which they went down soon became so frightfully great that the objects along the shore could not be distinguished, but became streaked and confused to their sight.

Now and again the raft would strike against one of the black rocks, that rose like a monster out of the water, and then it would spin and whirl down the torrent as if determined to throw off its occupants.

Bend after bend was passed, and Sam began to think that the rapids extended indefinitely, when to his horror the raft struck against another rock, and with such force that the ropes, fastening one end, snapped and broke like a silken thread in the hands of a giant.

At the same instant the logs parted and spread out like a fan, throwing all the occupants into the water.

Now the wisdom of Sam's precaution in tying themselves to the raft became evident.

Had it not been for this they would have been swept apart and drowned at once, but as it was the ropes not only kept them together, but enabled them to haul them-

selves back to the logs and cling to them for support.

The dog was, of course, thrown out with the others, and was at once swept beyond reach, though for some minutes Sam could see the brave creature facing the current and making a desperate effort to swim back.

Sam was just beginning to feel that the raft must soon go to pieces, when they were suddenly swept around a bend and into a calm expanse of water, though a few hundred yards further on he saw the line of white foam that indicated other rapids ahead.

Calling to his companions to assist him, and putting forth a superhuman effort himself, Sam succeeded in getting the raft out of the current and into a little cove where there was shallow water and a ledge of smooth, shelving rocks that made a good landing place.

They straightened out the logs, made them fast again, and then they took off the arms and frayed blankets that had not been swept from the raft by the rocks and rapids.

This done the three clambered up to a dry place, though they were so wet that it would not have made any difference if they stood in the water.

Thinking that Ulna might have made a landing at some point along the shore of this calm expanse, Sam looked up and down both banks, but excepting Ike, Wah Shin and himself there was not a living creature in sight, even the dog had been unable to resist the force of the current.

"Dis am a mighty bad fix, sure enuff," were Ike's

first words as he surveyed his dripping form and then began slowly to take in the situation.

"It might be worse," was Sam's comment, though if he had been called on to explain how it well could be worse, he would have been at a loss to tell.

"Watel we do nex," asked Wah Shin, and he half raised his hands and let them fall again to indicate his utter helplessness.

Sam could not reply. He would have felt a great sense of relief if either of the others had made a reasonable suggestion.

It was growing dark, and he knew that it would be madness to attempt the river again till the light of another full day lay before them.

In answer to Wah Shin's question, Ike said:

"I'll tell yeh w'at I'd like to do, Wah."

"I can tellee mesel lat too," said Wah Shin.

"In de fust place I'd like some nice dry clothes."

"I too," said Wah.

"Den I wouldn't mind bein' in a nice house."

"Ugh," and Wah shrugged himself as if he thought that a very lovely idea.

"Den," continued Ike, as he smacked his lips, "I'd like to be a settin' down to a table in dat house."

"Ha!" cried Wah.

"An'—an' I'd like to hab dat table filled way up wid good tings, an' me a settin' dar free to pile in all I wanted——"

"Dat am belly nice," said Wah.

"Den arter I'd eat, an' eat an' eat, till I couldn't

more'n stan', I'd have some one pick me up and tote me off to de wahmest, softest bed——"

At this point Sam interrupted by saying:

"We must all take off our clothes and wring them out, for I am not going to try it again till morning."

CHAPTER XIX.

AFLOAT AGAIN.

WORK is the one certain remedy for a troubled mind. Sam felt that if he didn't do something he should go distracted, and judging by his own feelings he reasoned that it would be better for Ike and Wah Shin if their hands and brains were employed.

He made them wring out their own clothes and the blankets, and spread them on the rocks to dry; and then all three set to work to repair the damage to the raft.

They found that the ropes that held the logs together had been cut and frayed by the keen edges of the rocks, with which they were brought into contact.

They took the whole raft to pieces; first having tied the rope till it was as strong, though shorter, than it was before, and then they refastened the whole structure, making it as secure as possible with the material at hand.

They had but just completed their work, and made the raft fast by anchoring it to a stone, when it suddenly grew so dark that they could hardly see each other.

They next put on their clothes, which were far from

being dry, and their discomfort was increased by a keen, cold wind, that came driving down the cañon.

"Wat's to be did de nex'?" asked Ike, his teeth chattering and his voice tremulous with the cold.

"We must move about till our clothes get dry. It will never do to have rheumatism added to our other troubles," said Sam.

"Wa'al, I dunno dat we'd be much de wuss off, if we had rheumatiz, an' measles, an' toothaches, an' dem tings. Fac' is, Mistah Sam, we couldn't well be in a badder fix, no matter wat happened to us."

"Oh, yes," drawled Wah Shin, "'spose we hab no clothes, no laftee, no gun, no can gettee way, den wat?"

"Keep moving, boys, till you get warm," called out Sam, and he set the example by walking about on the flat top of the rock, taking care that neither himself nor companions went too close to the perilous edge.

The exertion and the heat of their bodies warmed them up and dried their clothes, but by this time it was near midnight.

There was no danger of being disturbed by savage foe or wild beast, still Sam thought it better to keep up the system of guards he had first established.

He was so weary that he could have dropped on the hard, cold rock on which he stood, and been asleep at once, but that fine sense of duty that distinguished all his acts, led him to forget or put aside his own wants for the safety and comfort of others.

But though Ike loved to eat and sleep as well as any youth, black or white, that ever lived, there was a

"streek" of thoughtfulness and unselfishness in his character that asserted itself now and then.

When the order of the watch was arranged, Ike laid his hand on his young master's shoulder and said:

"See heah, Mistah Sam, does yeh tink I'm blind?"

"Certainly not, Ike. Why should you ask such a question as that?" asked Sam, in great surprise.

"Coz, Ize got de reasons."

"Well, what are they?"

"Don't yeh tink I'ze been a watchin' ob yeh?"

"What of it, Ike?"

"Dar's dis ob it. I'ze seed yeh a workin' an' a workin', an' not gettin' no rest nur sleep, but jest a layin' yersel' out foh to keer for us no-account folks, and make us comf'able. Now, I know I'm mean 'bout habin' my share ob grub an' sleepin', an' dem tings, but I ain't so mean's not to see an' tink."

"You are a good fellow, Ike, but I really can't see what you are driving at," said Sam.

"I'm dribein' at dis, dat you'z got to rest de fust one. Har, de blankets ain't so awful wet, an' if you ain't wahm enough, yeh can hab my coat. So do lie down an' take a sleep, dat'll make yeh brain more clarer foh to tink to-morrow.

When one is inclined to a thing, it does not require much urging.

Sam yielded to Ike's entreaties, which were supported by Wah Shin, in the strongest English he could command.

They made him as comfortable as possible under the

circumstances, and, after promising to wake him when his turn came, they crept off some distance, and sitting down side by side they talked in whispers like a pair of conspirators.

"Wah Shin?"

"Glang, Ike, me gottee no deaf," said Wah.

"You're a good feller."

"Me tinkee so, too," said the modest Mongolian.

"You like Mistah Sam?"

"Oh, yes; likee him gleat heap."

"I thought so."

"Him belly fine youngee man."

"Now, Wah, you an' me's had a heap sight more sleep dan Mistah Sam since we started out on dis yar scrimmidge, ain't we?"

"Oh, yes, heap molee."

"So," continued Ike with the confidential whisper of one about to communicate a great secret, "I wants you an' me to play a trick on him."

"Playee tlick!" repeated Wah, puzzled as to the meaning.

"Yes; yeh see he's sleepin' now like a angel."

"Dunno; me nebel see angel. W'at him?"

Without attempting to enlighten Wah as to the nature of angels, of which it must be confessed he had only a vague conception himself, Ike said.

"We must let him sleep right straight 'long till de mornin'; den w'en he gits up an' rubs his eyes an' sees it's daylight, he'll be dat s'prised he won't know w'at to say. Won't dat be a trick?"

"Him belly nice tlick," chuckled Wah. "Heap muchee fun. Let 'im sleep; you, me watchee till sun him come top-side galore. Ike, you gottee heap big head," and Wah patted the black boy's head in a way that showed affection and approval.

A generous master makes faithful servants. We do not know whether this is an adage or not, but it sounds as if it ought to be.

So weary was poor Sam that Ike and Wah Shin might have slept through the night without his knowing it, but it did not require his watchful presence to make them dutiful.

They divided the night into two reliefs, each taking a half and doing his duty with the fine sense of pleasure that came from the knowledge that they were cheating Sam into a long and much needed rest.

Sam certainly was much surprised when he got up in the morning and saw the flush of day in the strip of sky far overhead and the light coming into the depths of the cañon.

He was certainly much refreshed by his rest, and when he saw Ike smiling near by, he at once guessed what had been done.

"Why didn't you wake me up?" he asked.

Ike laughed and at once told him of "the trick" he and Wah Shin had played.

Sam was much touched by this evidence of thoughtfulness and devotion, and he fastened it in his memory, that it might be easily recalled if the chance ever came to show his appreciation in another form than words.

This was the first morning that they were wholly without food since starting on their journey.

All were decidedly hungry, but not a word was said about eating. Even Ike, always ready to show he had an appetite, felt that it would be somewhat personal to talk about "grub," but at heart he blamed himself for having eat so much the day before. It would have been the part of wisdom, he thought, to have put a little away for this morning.

"Wa'al, Mistah Sam, wat's to be did nex'?" asked Ike, as he looked down at the white line that marked the beginning of another series of unknown rapids about three hundred yards away.

"We must try it again, Ike," said Sam, bravely.

"Down de ribber?"

"Do you think we could go up?"

"Wa'al, not berry well, an' if we could dis chile wouldn't be in foh tryin' it again."

"Then we must go down."

"No cannee help oulsel's, if so we go flom dis." said Wah Shin, with all the wisdom of Confucius.

Once more the few remaining things were placed as securely as was possible on the raft.

Again, and without the wondering of the day before, Ike and Wah Shin imitated Sam by tying themselves to the raft.

With much of that feeling of desperation that stirs an officer who leads his men in a hopeless assault against a powerful enemy, Sam pushed the raft into the stream.

The current near the shore was slow, but as they got

out further it became more rapid, until at length they shot down with the speed of a race-horse for the white line of foam that flashed between the grim walls like the teeth of some fierce monster set in lips of stone.

"Cling tight to the raft, boys!" cried Sam, as the logs began to groan and tremble. "Cling fast and keep cool! We are going through all right!"

The brave fellow did not have much faith in his own words, but they had an inspiriting effect on the others.

Into the warring rapids shot the raft, and in an instant all were drenched in the spray that dashed around them.

Sam could not see ten feet ahead.

His mind, like the waters and the raft, was in a wild whirl; yet, with the grip of a drowning man, he clung to the logs and tried to shout words of cheer to the others.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TRIAL BEGINS.

AT THE instigation of Collins and his partner, Si Brill, a number of men started off from Hurley's Gulch to see if they could find Sam Willett and his companions, or learn anything of their fate.

Neither the searchers nor those who sent them had any great faith in their mission, but the very fact that they tried shows that they were moved by a feeling of commendable humanity.

Three days passed and the men came back saying they could not find Sam Willett, nor the others, and giving it as their opinion, that they had all been drowned.

In the meantime Frank Shirley, who had much of that cunning and ingenuity for which men of his character are so often noted, sought to create the impression that Sam was alive, but that he had run away, in order not to be forced to appear against his father.

The night the searchers came back there was a great crowd in the bar of the principal saloon, and as Shirley was treating, as usual, he was the center of attraction and virtually the chairman of the gathering.

A few of the men had just expressed sorrow for Sam's death, when Shirley said:

"I'd be sorrier than any one if I knew the young

fellow was dead, but I'm happy to say I don't believe he is."

"Of course, you've got reasons for your belief," said one.

"Yes; I always have good reasons for everything I do and say," said Shirley, feeling the authority his free use of money had given him.

"Mebbe you'd tell us why you think so," said the man.

"I'll explain by asking you some questions," said Shirley, licking his lips, as he always did while speaking.

"Fire ahead," said the man.

"You remember that Indian boy—what's his name?"

"Ulna," suggested the man.

"Yes, Ulna. Well, the day of the arrest of these two men, Willett and Tims, for the cruel murder of poor Tom Edwards, this Indian boy was sent to Gold Cave Camp to bring back the son of one of the prisoners and a certain paper. Isn't that so?" and Shirley looked around for the approval of the assembly.

"Yes, that's so!" shouted a number.

"Now," continued Frank Shirley, with the deliberation of a man who had carefully weighed what he was about to say, "I ask you gentlemen if this Ulna returned to Hurley's Gulch?"

"No!" exclaimed half the men in the place.

"Of course he didn't. Now, what should we, as sensible men, infer from this fact?"

Again Shirley looked about the room, and as no one

attempted to say what should be inferred from the fact as stated, he proceeded to enlighten them.

"As Ulna did not come back and cannot be found, it is safe to infer that he succeeded in delivering his message to Mr. Willett's son."

"Yes," said the man who had drawn Shirley out, "I must say it looks very much that way."

"Very well; Mr. Willett's son, who is a wonderfully brave, bright young fellow, got that message, and from this fact I make another inference."

Shirley licked his lips and remained silent so long that it was becoming painful, and Badger voiced the feeling of the crowd by calling out:

"Go ahead and give us yer p'ints!"

"If Ulna could get to Gold Cave Camp in the night with that message, don't you think that young Sam Willett could get away?"

Nearly every one said this looked reasonable.

"Now, my belief," Shirley went on, "is that he and all hands did get away. The searchers, who have just come from the camp, say the place was cleaned out, rifles and all that being gone, which wouldn't be the case if the folks were drowned."

"But," said the man who had started this discussion, "if the young feller got away, why didn't he come right straight to Hurley's Gulch?"

"Ah, that's the vital question," said Shirley, with a more vigorous lick at his lips. "Now, you'd like to know why I think he didn't come here?"

"I certainly should," said the man.

"It was because he had no paper to bring. Oh, he's a bright fellow; he's a second cousin of mine, and I can put myself in his place and just see how he reasoned about this matter."

"Don't wait, but go right in and tell us all about it," said the impatient Badger, whose admiration for his employer was rising every moment.

"Why, he reasoned that if he came here without Tom Edwards' receipt—which he knew had no existence—that the gentlemen of the vigilance committee would make short work of his father——"

"And he was as right as right can be in that guess," interrupted Badger.

"But," continued Shirley, "being a keen young fellow, he made up his mind that nothing would be done to his father if he stayed away. He believed the vigilantes would wait for several days, as they've already done, and that by the end of that time their anger would go down; they would look more lightly on the murder of poor Tom Edwards—and that would be the last of it. But talking is mighty dry work; step up to the bar, boys, and have a drink with me."

Like other invitations of the same kind, from the same source, this one was promptly accepted, the effect being to convince nearly every man that there was no getting away from Frank Shirley's reasoning.

Before the meeting broke up that night, which it did not do till a late hour, it was firmly decided that the trial of Mr. Willett and Hank Tims should take place the next day, which being Sunday would enable every one at Hurley's Gulch to be present.

In addition to its effect on the unfortunate men, the foregoing conversation serves admirably to show how a cunning and malicious man can pervert facts to suit himself, and while making them seem most like truth to the reason, have them exactly opposite to it in fact.

Unobserved by the crowd in the bar, Collins had overheard this conversation, and the conclusion to which a majority of the vigilantes had come.

Being simple-hearted, Collins was imposed on for the time being by Shirley's argument, and while he was listening to it he really believed that it might be true; but as he slowly returned to the dugout, his good sense asserted itself and he saw the utter falsity of the fellow's reasoning.

Knowing how deeply troubled Mr. Willett was by the uncertain fate of his beloved son, Collins said nothing to him about the decision of the vigilantes till the following morning.

After breakfast Collins repeated the talk at the saloon the night before, and added:

"I hope the feller's right 'bout the boy's safety."

"Ah, I wish he were," sighed Mr. Willett. "But if my dear boy were living, and he could get to me, sleep would not touch his eyes till he was again at my side."

"Thar's one thing in partiklar I'd like to git out of this scrape for," said Hank, and on being asked by Brill what that thing was, he continued:

"I'd like to lick that lyin' slanderin' cowardly Shirley. Only to think of a critter like him accusin' young Sam Willett of doin' a low, mean trick. Ah, he's a dirty dog, if one ever came west of the Sierra Madres."

Up to this time Mr. Willett had not explained to Collins and Si Brill, Shirley's reasons for desiring to see his son dead and himself out of the way. He did so now.

"Wa'al!" exclaimed Brill, "that thar explanation shows the culled pusson in the wood-pile, as clar as daylight. Ah, I only wish Bob Sturgis—he was a lawyer—didn't leave camp when he did; but I'll see that you have a show to defend yourself, if we've got to fight for it?"

While the sturdy miner was speaking, two rough looking men—they were the worst element in the vigilance committee—appeared in the doorway and one of them called out:

"We've come from the kimitty, and we'er agoin' to fotch up the prizners; so trot 'em out."

"We'll trot 'em out," replied Collins, as he took down his rifle from a peg, "and we'll trot along with 'em, for neither Si Brill nor me has give up our office as guards yet, an' what's more, we ain't agoin' to do it till this case is ended, one way or the other."

"We ain't got no objection," growled one of the men, "only don't keep us waitin' har all day."

"If yer in a great hurry," retorted Brill, as he also reached for his rifle, "go back as you come, for we've got charge of the prizners, and you can't take 'em from us without a fight."

The two men stepped back to consult, and Collins whispered, as he handed Mr. Willett and Hank two revolvers each:

"Hide those about your clothes, you may find them handy before we get through with this scrape."

Mr. Willett and Hank Tims quickly secreted the revolvers in their inside breast pockets and then followed the guards out of the dugout.

They clambered up the bank, ignoring the two men who constituted the "kimitty" and went on to the hotel, the dining-room of which—it was also the kitchen—was set apart by the proprietor for the trial.

The place was already crowded to suffocation, and a curious feature of the gathering was the fact that the burly, bearded man, who was to act as judge, and every other man in the room, was armed to the teeth and looked as if eager for a fight.

CHAPTER XXI.

A BREAK IN THE CLOUDS.

THE SECOND series of rapids, though much more dreaded by Sam than the first, proved to be neither very long, nor, by comparison, very dangerous.

Within ten minutes from the time of entering them they were passed in safety, and the raft was floating down the broadest, smoothest currrent they had experienced since starting on their perilous journey.

Ike and Wah Shin cautiously released their hold on the logs and looked about them.

Sam again stood up with the steering pole in his hands.

Straight as an arrow, and for fully three miles, the river could be seen flowing down between its towering banks.

This sight brought to Sam a sense of great relief, and its effect on Ike was decidedly exhilarating.

Standing up in the front of the raft he waved his arms like a windmill and shouted out:

"Bress de Lor! we'z safe! we'z safe!"

Escape from the awful dangers they had just come through so miraculously made Ike forget, for the moment, his hunger and the fact that there could be no safety to people floating on a shaky raft, down a river

whose course seemed through the very heart of sterile, towering mountains.

Ah, well, this only goes to show that, no matter how desperate the situation we always have something to be thankful for; and that no matter how bad things are, so long as life, health and hope remain, they might be worse.

Another thing very unusual in this experience was the fact that the cañon walls, instead of rising straight up from the water, stood back, leaving on either side a strip on which, amid great masses of detached sandstone there grew a number of stunted mezquite and cedar trees.

They were all as wet as they well could be, but they had grown so accustomed to this that Sam made up his mind not to go ashore to dry their clothes, but to keep right on, when a shout from Ike caused him to change his purpose.

"I see a wolf or a deer; way dar to de right!" and Ike pointed down to where the bushes hid the rocks.

"Lat no deel," said Wah Shin, as he bent forward and shaded his eyes.

"Mebbe yeh ken tell us wat it is," said Ike, with a touch of sarcasm, for having discovered the animal he felt that he had a right to say what it was.

"Lat's yalla doggee," said Wah Shin.

And Wah Shin was right, for at that instant the animal sprang into view and began a vigorous barking, and a frisking back and fourth.

"It's Maj! It's Maj!" cried Ike.

Maj it certainly was, and the joy of the faithful creature at seeing his friends was touching.

Sam at once guided the raft to the shore, but while it was yet many yards away, the dog swam out, was pulled on board and at once jumped on Sam, who if he had not been wet before certainly would have been now.

"Dat ar dog looks to me ez if he had been habin' a big feed some place," said Ike, when they got on shore, and he could examine Maj's rounded form, which his dripping coat made more conspicuous.

"Mebbe him full of watel," suggested Wah Shin.

"No," said Ike, as he pressed the dog's sides, "it's grub; good solid grub." Then, addressing Maj, he said, in tones intended to be very seductive: "See har, ole feller, don't go foh to tell me dat yer hungry, like we is. You'se been eatin' meat, don't say 'no' foh I won't stan' it; but, like a good dorg, show me de place whar yeh found it, an' if ebber I gits out ob dis yeh fix, I'll buy yeh a brass collar, wif yeh name on de outside in great big letters."

As if he understood this and was anxious to earn the reward so generously offered him, Maj started off with a short, sharp bark, but before he had gone very far he turned and came slowly back again, as if he had changed his mind.

Meanwhile, Wah Shin got together a pile of dry wood, and, as the matches in Sam's water-proof case escaped the water, they soon had a roaring fire, before which their cargo and their clothes—the latter well tattered—were placed to dry.

At first Sam, who was now very hungry, was inclined to think that it was a whim of Ike's that led him to see anything suggestive of food in the dog's appearance, but when he came to look carefully at the animal and study his contented manner, he was satisfied that he had found something to eat since being washed from the raft.

With nearly all his clothes drying before the fire, Sam, followed by Ike, started off to examine the shore further down.

He had not gone far when he noticed great clefts in the walls of the cañon, as if the mighty mass had been cracked by some tremendous power.

These fissures ran up and back for thousands of feet, but the largest one visible was not of sufficient width to admit of their getting up in that way, neither were these openings on the side of the cañon which they must ascend in order to reach Hurley's Gulch.

An examination of the point where one of the fissures came down to the shore convinced Sam that some creatures had used this passage-way recently as an avenue for ascending to the upper world, or coming down to this profound and silent valley.

He had just communicated this opinion to Ike, and was about to turn away when his attention was attracted to the dog, now standing with his right paw raised, his tail extended and his whole form as rigid as if it had been cut in marble.

"See!" shouted Ike, "Maj is on de p'int! Whar, whar's de game?"

The words had scarcely passed his lips when there

was a squeak and a rushing noise, and a score, or more, long-eared rabbits dashed by within twenty feet of the party.

"Hooraw! Rabbits! rabbits!" cried Ike. "Let us git our guns! Rabbits makes bully grub!"

Sam had not his gun with him, but he at once started back to the fire and examined his rifle, which had come through without being damaged.

The water had not affected the metallic cartridges, of which he had a good supply left. Filling his belt with these he started off, Ike keeping by his side with his remarkable old shot-gun on his shoulder, though its utter uselessness had been emphasized by its recent heavy rusting.

Ike was useful, however, in holding back the dog, who had evidently been feeding on rabbit since his landing at this place.

Sam was an excellent rifleman, having had much practice, and being possessed of nerves as true and steady as steel, without which the weapon can never be mastered.

He crept ahead, and about three hundred yards below the camp he came within sight of a little cove, or pocket, in the cañon wall that seemed literally to swarm with long-eared rabbits.

He fired with judgment, and kept firing while the creatures remained in sight and he was sure of his shots.

The result was that within five minutes he had killed thirteen rabbits.

Everyone that was struck was taken, and to the true hunter, who never inflicts an unnecessary wound on the animals he hunts, this is always a great satisfaction.

Ike was disappointed that he had not been permitted to try "her," as he called his old shotgun, on the game; but, as he picked up the goodly load of rabbits and carried it back to camp, it would be difficult to imagine a more delighted fellow.

It is said that "it never rains but it pours," and this seemed to be the case with the sudden turn in the tide of good luck that had set in toward our unfortunate friends.

When they got back to camp, they found that Wah Shin had been testing the fish lines and flies, which they had scarcely thought of up to this time, and with such unexpectedly good luck that he had landed two fine trout and was in the act of pulling in the third when Ike came to sight laden down with game.

The least ray of light is cheering to those who have been long in darkness; and the briefest cessation from pain is like Heaven to those groaning in agony! so the prospect of food—a prospect made all the more delightful by the gnawing hunger each felt so keenly—made them forget for the time all the trials they had passed and the uncertain future that lay before them.

Even the fire blazed up cheerily as if in sympathy with their feelings, and Maj lay down like a faithful scout, who has guided the famished into a land—of rabbits.

In almost as short a time as it takes to tell it, the rabbits and the fish were cooking.

We shall not attempt to describe that feast, for there are some things impossible to even our expressive English tongue.

Suffice it to say, each ate all he could, with a result that "made away" with one half the supply on hand.

They had just finished their most enjoyable meal, when Wah Shin, who chanced to be looking toward the river, uttered a cry of alarm.

The others quickly turned in that direction, and, to their amazement, they saw the spectral figure of a dark man rising from the water.

CHAPTER XXII.

"JOY! JOY! IT IS ULNA AGAIN!"

UNLIKE Ike and Wah Shin, Sam Willett was not the least superstitious, yet, as he saw the spectral figure rising from the shore he could not imagine it a human being.

"Did you think me dead?" asked the dripping figure.

By this time Sam had leaped to his feet and advanced toward their extraordinary visitor.

He was not long in doubt.

There was no mistaking the lithe figure and the now pinched but still expressive face.

"Joy! joy! It is Ulna again!" cried Sam, and with a bound he was on the shore and the young Ute was in his arms.

As soon as Ike and Wah Shin were convinced that this was Ulna in the flesh and not his ghost, they ran down and performed such a war dance about him, as they held his hands, as he never witnessed around the camp fires of his own tribe.

When Ike could give expression to his delight, he pulled Ulna in the direction of the fire, calling out the while:

"Tum along; tum along! you looks if yeh hadn't had nawthin' to eat foh years. We kin fix yeh. We

kin stuff yeh with rabbits till yeh can't stan'; an' w'en dem's gone we knows de place whar we kin go an' git lots moah."

Ulna certainly did look famished, but true to himself, neither by word nor sign did he give expression to the sufferings he had passed through nor the agony of hunger he was now enduring.

The half of a cooked rabbit was left from the recent banquet, and Ulna had this placed in his hand and made to sit on a stone before the fire.

"Eat 'em allee up; me gettee nodle one, no time," said Wah Shin, who was never so happy as when he was cooking.

"Yes," urged Ike, "wade right in. Dar ain't no stint dis time. We've found de head-quahtahs ob all de rabbits, an' we ain't a gwine foh to be hungry no moah."

After all these expressions of hospitality and good will, Sam had a chance to say, as he took a seat beside Ulna.

"I thought I had seen you for the last time, but thank God you and all of us are saved to meet again."

"When I called 'farewell' to you," said Ulna, "I felt the end had come, but like the people of my tribe I did not give up——"

"Nevah give up de ship," interjected Ike.

"I made up my mind to resist the flood till my strength was gone," continued Ulna.

"One ain't got much strent, onless he's got plenty to eat an' lots ob time to sleep," said Ike, who, though much interested in Ulna, felt that he must give expression to his own feelings or choke.

The young Indian explained that he was so weighted down by his rifle and cartridges that, after the first rapids had been passed, he had only strength left to keep afloat without being able to make the shore.

"When I was swept into the second rapids," he said, "all hope vanished. I must have been rendered unconscious by some blow, but be that as it may, I have no memory of reaching the bank. When I came to last night I was half lying in the water. I drew myself out and walked about, trying to find something to eat. I could not sleep for thinking of you, for I did not see, after what I had suffered, how you were to get through the rapids on the raft.

"I cannot describe to you how my heart beat with joy a few hours ago, when I saw the raft shooting out of the foam with all its passengers except the dog on board. I saw you making for the shore, and I shouted to attract your attention to the opposite side."

"If we'd a heerd yeh, yeh wouldn't ha' had to hollered twice," said Ike.

"I did not feel very strong till I saw you, and then, as there was nothing else left me, I made up my mind to try swimming across."

"An' you made it; you made it like a—like a mice, an' yeh fotched yeh rifle widge yeh," said Ike, in tones of great approval.

"Ike he heap talkee," said Wah Shin, as he sat another half of a broiled rabbit before Ulna. "Me cookee light slate along."

"And now," said Ulna, who had the rare faculty of

eating while he spoke, "tell me how you made out after we parted in that strange way."

Sam narrated the adventures, already recorded, and after some discussion, to Ike's great delight, it was decided to remain here for at least another day, and to lay in a supply of rabbits before they faced the unknown and dreaded cañon again.

After Ulna had appeased his hunger, Sam made him lie down before the fire and take a sleep, while he and Ike went off on another hunting expedition.

They brought home several loads of rabbits during the day, and Wah Shin, who believed the game would keep better if it were cooked, busied himself broiling rabbits till the last one was in an edible condition.

Toward evening Ulna got up from the blanket, in which he had been wrapped, and when he put on his clothes he looked like an entirely different being from the spectre that appeared at the river side some hours before.

Now that the immediate danger from hunger was over, Sam would have been comparatively happy had it not been for thoughts of his father.

It is well that it is not given to us to lift the veil of the future, or to tell what is happening beyond the range of our own vision. Yet, it must be confessed, that it would have eased the minds of the loving father and the devoted son, if each could have known of the situation of the other at this time.

It was not in Ike's nature to feel trouble for any length of time. He had all the light-heartedness of his race, and an enviable capacity for enjoying the present.

He played with the dog; he laughed and sang, till at length, overcome with the excess of enjoyment—and it may be the great quantities of broiled rabbit he had eaten, he threw himself on the ground before the fire and was asleep in no time.

Again Sam detailed the guards, taking the first watch himself, and when another morning dawned they found themselves more rested and refreshed than they had been at any time since leaving Gold Cave Camp.

The night before Ulna busied himself cutting the jack-rabbits' skins into strips, which he knotted and twisted into ropes, and these ropes were found of the greatest use in binding the pieces of the raft together before they resumed their journey down the long, dark, watery arcade.

They were afloat again soon after daylight, and the thought that they were safe and sound and all together again brought unspeakable joy to every heart—and we might include Maj in the list, for from his seat in the middle of the raft he eyed his friends with an expression of great comfort and satisfaction.

Long before the sun rose high enough to look into the cañon they had drifted many miles away from their camp of the morning.

The current, which Sam estimated at about three miles an hour, was unbroken; flowing on in silent majesty, between the cold, gray cliffs that rose at points for more than a mile sheer up, till their eyes grew giddy in measuring their elevation.

Here and there, to the right and left, they passed side cañons, black and forbidding, like cells set in the walls of a mighty prison.

In the afternoon these side cañons became more frequent, and as they approached one Sam saw that a stream of clear water was pouring out from between its walls.

As this opening was on the east, or left bank, and in the direction of Hurley's Gulch, he determined to try and get the raft into it, and see if they could find an avenue to the upper world through its bed.

He told Ulna of his purpose, and in an instant the young Ute had a pole in his hand.

They could touch bottom at this point and as the current from the side cañon was not very strong, they succeeded in getting the raft in.

The bed of the stream was so narrow in places that Ike on one side and Wah Shin on the other were enabled to help along by pulling at the rocks.

It was growing dark again, and Sam, elated at their success so far, began to fear that they might not be able to reach a place where they could make fast for the night, when all at once the cañon walls, as if they had been touched by the wand of a magician, expanded into a beautiful bowl-shaped valley.

This valley, in the dim light, looked to be fully a quarter of a mile in diameter, and to the great surprise of all it had grassy banks; and as their feet touched the sward the delicious odor of wild thyme and Indian pinks filled the air.

They found enough dry wood to make a fire to warm up their meat.

"It looks to me," said Sam, as he sat quietly before the fire, for some time after supper, "as if the worst is over, and that we can get to Hurley's Gulch without much trouble from here."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRIAL IN PROGRESS.

IT CANNOT be denied that these rude forms of justice, known as "Judge Lynch's Courts," have done some good in disorganized conditions of society, by deterring, if not in punishing, crime. Indeed, in many cases vigilance committees have been of the greatest service, even in places where the law is supposed to be in force. At one time these committees saved the city of San Francisco from the control of murderers and gamblers.

But on the whole they do more harm than good, for, as in the present instance at Hurley's Gulch, bad men join them for self-protection or to carry out their own selfish ends.

The only men who can properly administer justice are those accustomed to weighing evidence, and, no matter how well meaning, rough miners are apt to be influenced by their feelings rather than their reason.

It would not have taken a stranger long to see that a majority of the men gathered in that canvas-covered apartment, in the hotel at Hurley's Gulch, were prejudiced against the prisoners.

To Mr. Willett, who was familiar with the dignified forms of courts of justice in the East, the proceedings

looked like a burlesque on law, for an attempt was made to do things after the manner of long established methods.

Before the prisoners were brought in, it was decided by the committee having the matter in charge, that a man named Jacks, an ignorant, red-faced fellow, who had occupied a similar position on a former occasion, should act as judge.

Mr. Willett and Hank Tims were given camp-chairs directly in front of "the judge," who was making a desperate effort to maintain the dignified bearing supposed to be essential to the office.

The judge rapped with the bottom of a heavy tumbler—the contents of which he had just drank—on a little pine table by his side and called out:

"The next thing in order, gents, is to 'lect a sheriff and a clerk, for I propose that everything in this court shall be square and reg'lar; and, if the prizners has any objections to the officers they must say so now, or forever after hold their peace."

When the judge had ceased speaking, a man with a bullet-head, a red shirt and no neck to speak of—he was the proprietor of this remarkable hotel—pushed himself through the crowd and called out:

"I nominate Badger for sheriff of this here court."

Without waiting for this motion to be seconded, the judge yelled out:

"All in favor of Badger for sheriff say 'aye,' all opposed say 'aye,' too."

As this arrangement left no chance for those who

might be opposed to Badger to say "no," he was declared to be unanimously elected.

"Next thing in order is to 'lect a clerk," said the judge.

The man who had nominated Badger now yelled out:

"I name Frank Shirley for clerk!"

The judge, without waiting for the forms in such cases, would have declared Shirley elected had not Mr. Willett leaped to his feet and shouted:

"I protest."

"One of the prizners protests," said the judge, and he picked up the tumbler with an angry gesture, as if about to hurl it at Mr. Willett's head.

Frank Shirley evidently expected to act as clerk of the court without any opposition, for as soon as his name was called he pushed himself to the front.

"What objection have you got to Mr. Shirley, I'd like to know?" said the judge, his face growing redder with anger.

"I have many objections," said Mr. Willett, not at all intimidated by the frowns of Shirley's friends.

"Can't the man write?" asked the judge.

"I suppose he can," replied Mr. Willett.

"Wa'al, if he can write what more do you want in a clerk?" said the judge.

"Many things."

"What are they?"

"He should be free from prejudices."

"And so he is."

"And so he is not," said Mr. Willett, calmly but

firmly. "He is my bitter enemy. He has been setting the good men of this place against me by his slanders and unblushing falsehoods. If you want this trial to be fair you must not begin by making officers of men who may find it to their interest to convict me."

"I mean to do what's fair," Shirley managed to say. "And I am not seeking this place. If you elect me I will serve, and do my whole duty like a man, forgetting the past bad character of this unfortunate man, Willett, who married my cousin and sent the poor woman to the grave by his cruelties."

This speech had a powerful effect on the mob, for the men began to stamp, and some of them yelled:

"Don't pay no heed to the prizner, but go right straight on with the trial!"

"Yes, we'll go on with the trial," said the judge, rapping for order, as if determined to have it or break the table.

Still cool and undaunted, Mr. Willett stood up till the storm had somewhat abated.

"If," he said, "I am to have no voice in my own defence, then this trial is a farce and the sooner it ends in the murder of two innocent men the better. If the judge did not mean that I could object to the officers you were about to elect, why did he say so? I am simply availing myself of the privilege you grant me, and I can give you still stronger reasons for my opposition to this Frank Shirley, whom I here denounce, as a man without manly courage or honest principle, and wholly unworthy of belief. He is the one man in this territory who will

reap wealth from the death of myself and my son; are you willing to let such a man take part in a trial that may seal my doom in his interest?"

The judge was about to make an angry comment on this, but he was prevented by Collins, who pushed his way through the crowd, and said with a flash of the eyes that boded no good to those who opposed him:

"Thar ain't no man in Hurley's Gulch, or out of it either that'll stand before my face, or the face of my pard, Si Brill, and say that either of us don't always tell the right up and down truth. If thar is sich a man har, I'd like him to trot himself out so that I ken git a good square look at him for 'bout three seconds and a half."

As Collins said this, he quickly threw his strong right hand back on the stock of one of his revolvers and took a calm survey of the sea of astonished faces.

If there was any man present who had doubts as to the honesty and veracity of Mr. Collins and his partner, he thought it the part of prudence to keep them to himself, for the present at least.

"Now," continued Collins, after a half minute of painful silence, "I happen to know, and so does my pard, Si Brill, that that sneak, Shirley, who has been tryin' to make friends with the honest men and the mean ones too, in this camp, by keepin' of 'em howlin' drunk, will fall into a big estate over thar in Michigan, if Mr. Willett's son should chance to peg out afore he gits to be old enough to vote in politics. So, for one, I ain't a goin' to stand by and let that cur have anythin' to

do with the case. And more than that, you fellers ought to feel ashamed, clar down to your boots, at 'lectin' for sheriff of this court a man who's known in every minin' camp this side of the Sierras as a drunkard, a bummer—yes, and a murderer! that's Badger, and I make the charge right here to his face. If he don't deny it, mebbe some of his new found friends, Jacks, the judge of the court for instance, might like to take it up. If so, I'm just about as ready to back my words now as at any other time."

Again Collins drew himself up and looked about him, with his right hand gripping the stock of his six-shooter.

"See nar, Collins," said the judge, speaking in tones intended to be very soothing, "we're not here to fight, but to do our duty as good men——"

"But is it doin' yer duty to tell the prizners they kin object, and then, when one of 'em does so, to try and choke him off, so's to put in an enemy and a sneak as the clerk of this court?"

"Wa'll, Collins, thar's other folks that ken write in this camp," said the judge. "So I'll withdraw Mr. Shirley, and let another be named."

Much crest-fallen at this decision of the judge, and the very uncomplimentary opinion of himself which he had been forced to listen to, Frank Shirley shrunk back into the crowd from which he had lately emerged with so much confidence.

Even Badger, usually so ready to assert himself, remained dumb in the presence of this strong, brave man.

A young miner, bearing the appropriate name of

Clark, was selected as clerk of the court, and then the judge said it was in order to swear in a jury.

"'Cordin' to law," he added, "the prizners has a right to ax the jury questions, and to object to 'em if they doesn't pan out all right. But I hope we'll git along faster'n we've been doin' else this yar trial will last from July to eternity."

As Mr. Willett did not know any of the men who were called to act as jurors, he judged their fitness for the position by their appearance, and so he offered objections to only two, and they were drunk.

It was already noon when the judge declared that all the preliminaries were over, and that he was now prepared to go on with the trial in earnest, "and have justice did to the livin' and the dead."

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUT OF THE DEPTHS.

THE DELIGHT of Sam Willett and his friends at being out of the great cañon compensated them in part for the severe trials through which they had recently passed, and with the disappearance of the stupendous walls of the Colorado they believed all their troubles would vanish.

Daylight convinced them that they had encamped for the night in a spot that seemed like an Eden when compared with their recent resting-places, though back from the charming little valley the rocks rose straight up to a height nearly as great as those of the main river.

Hungry people care more for the quantity than the variety of their food, and so the boys made a hearty breakfast of the goodly supply of broiled rabbits, and then started to find a way out of the valley.

Sam and Ulna soon discovered that though they could not take the raft much further up the side cañon, that they could march along its bed at the bottom of which flowed a little stream of clear, cool water.

They came back to camp, made up their arms, blankets and remaining supplies into four bundles, and Sam announced that they would follow up the stream on

foot, for its direction was directly toward Hurley's Gulch.

With wise precaution Sam made fast the raft, for though such an event was to be dreaded, he wanted to have it within reach if they were again forced to go back to the cañon in which they had suffered so much.

"Golly!" exclaimed Ike, as they took up their line of march along the stream, "dis seems like ole times."

"How so?" asked Sam, who was always pleased to see the colored boy in a good humor.

"W'y, we're totin' oursels instead of habin' de raft tote us. I 'clar to goodness, I nebber wants to see a raft agin the longest day I lib. Ize done wif rafts foreber and eber, amen."

"Duno," said Wah Shin, who seemed always very solemn, "dat laft sabe us, me no go backe on laft. No laft, den we allee dead."

Maj barked approval of this and began to leap on every one in turn to show his delight at the new method of travel.

They found no serious obstacles in the cañon, though the sharp grade rose in a way that indicated they were rising rapidly to the table lands above.

Late in the afternoon they came to a spring near the head of the ravine along which they had been marching all day, and, as it was well known to all that water and fuel were scarce in the uplands, it was decided to stay here for the night.

While Ike and Wah Shin gathered dry cactus and weeds to make a fire, Ulna shouted to them not to make

a light till he came back; then motioning to Sam to follow him he led the way up a steep ascent, the summit of which promised a view of the surrounding country.

After a half hour's clambering they reached the top, and after the cramped range of vision that recently hemmed them in, the sight that now gladdened their eyes was thrilling and inspiring beyond expression.

A table land, nearly devoid of vegetation, broken here and there by chasms, or stately pillars of sand rock came to view under a blaze of golden sun-light that poured down from a cloudless sky with a splendor nearly blinding in its brilliancy.

Away to the east the wall of the Sierra Madre mountains rose up like an amathystine rampart, the snow peaks glowing in the light of the declining sun like mighty masses of fire opal.

After inhaling a long breath, the better to give expression to his surprise and delight, Sam exclaimed in the poetical language of Mrs. Hemans:

"For the strength of the hills we bless Thee, my God, our father's God!"

Ulna's fine face, though usually calm and impassive, now showed much feeling, but that this was not due to the glorious scenery about them was soon evident.

"Sam," he said, "I didn't care to speak to you before Ike and Wah Shin, for I did not want to excite them, but I saw something down there at the spring that troubles me very much."

"What was that?" asked Sam.

"A track."

"What kind of a track?"

"An Indian's."

"But this is the hunting ground of your people, the Utes, why should we fear?"

"There would be no war if the different tribes of men were content to stay in their own hunting grounds, but that track was made by an Apache," said Ulna, with more than usual seriousness.

"How do you know it was made by an Apache?"

"By the impression of the sole of the moccasin. The Mezcarillas have the sole in two pieces, sewed together down the middle; the Utes have their's in one.

"But the Apaches have recently made a treaty of peace with the whites; why should we fear them?" said Sam.

"The Apaches will break the treaty, or will defy it, if they can do so with safety. But they have never made a treaty with the Utes. For generations they have been at war with my people, and if they knew I was here they would be after my scalp with the hunger of wolves."

"They could not take yours unless they took mine," said Sam, reaching out his hand to prove his sincerity.

"I am certain of that, Sam; but I do not want to add to your dangers and troubles, if I cannot lessen them."

"Of course not, Ulna, but I do not understand you."

"It may be that the Apaches, and I am not sure they are about, will let you and the others go on without harm, while if they discover me they will be sure to

make an attack on all of us," said Ulna, speaking very slowly, but with a strong, steady voice.

"Well, we can't help that. If they attack us we shall be able to show that we have rifles and know how to handle them," said Sam, bravely.

"This is what I have been thinking," continued Ulna. "I can make my way alone from here faster than the four of us can, and I can elude the Apaches as the hawk eludes the wild-cat. If I can reach Hurley's Gulch I can start men out to your relief; if I fail you will be none the worse off."

"This is too serious a matter to decide at once," said Sam. "Even to save the lives of the others, I would not increase your danger——"

"But what if the danger of all is increased by my staying here?"

"Then I should say go, but let us go down to the spring and think it all over. I am sure we can tell Ike and Wah Shin about this; they are both plucky and faithful.

"As you say," was Ulna's reply, and he cast a quick glance about the horizon before descending from the rock on which they had been standing.

"What do you see?" asked Sam, looking eagerly in the direction of Ulna's fixed eyes.

"Apaches!" was the whispered reply.

"Where?"

"Off to the south."

Looking in the direction pointed out by Ulna, Sam saw, low down on the edge of the horizon, a number of

pigmy figures that but for their movements might have passed for bunches of cactus.

"Are they coming this way," asked Sam, unconsciously tightening his grip on his rifle, while his heart beat faster.

"I cannot tell that, but if they should come they must not find us here."

Ulna sprang down the rocks, followed by Sam, and they found Ike and Wah Shin about to start a fire.

"You must make no fire to-night," said Sam.

"What foh?" asked Ike, who had a strong prejudice in favor of hot food.

"Because we are afraid there are Indians near by."

"Injuns!" exclaimed Ike, and he pressed his hands to the top of his head, as if to keep down his rising scalp.

"Yes; we must fill our canteens with water and move from here at once.

"But whar to, Mistah Sam?"

"To the shelter of some rocks not far from the head of this ravine. Let the fire go, Wah Shin, we can get along without it to-night."

"Me no likee bad Injun; me no kalee fo' fi'," said Wah Shin, as he kicked over the pile of fuel, and hurriedly began to fill the four canteens.

The sun had set and the chilling shadows were creeping up from the cañons, in which they seemed to have their home during the day, when Sam and Ulna led the way into the broad plateau of the upper world.

The mass of rocks in which they sought shelter was close to the head of the rift.

The increasing darkness favored their reaching these rocks without being seen by any one not near by.

This was an admirable hiding place, and in the event of trouble it had every advantage for observation and defense.

In the midst of these rocks they ate their supper, and Sam detailed the guards for the night.

His greatest fear was that the dog might reveal, by growling, their hiding place to any who might come near. To guard against this as much as possible, he fastened a rope muzzle about the dog's head and told Ike to watch him.

Some three hours of darkness had passed when Ike called out:

"See har, Mistah Sam, this yar dog scents somethin' an' I can't hold him to save my life."

CHAPTER XXV.

FROM SAFETY INTO DANGER.

IT DID not need the low growling of the dog to convince our young friends that they were in the midst of danger.

Along the trail leading up from the ravine, they could hear low, gutteral voices, and they did not need to be told that the Apaches, whom they had seen as the sun was setting, had come to the spring, for the fall of moccasined feet could be heard dying out in that direction.

"The Apaches!" whispered Sam, as he grasped Ulna's arm with one hand, and clutched his rifle more tightly with the other.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Do you think they will discover us?"

"They cannot help doing so."

"What will be their next move after finding we are near by?"

"They will trail us down."

"To these rocks?"

"Yes."

"And then?"

"And then if they find me they will see that the

rising sun looks on one less Ute in the world," was Ulna's reply, given with his habitual calmness.

"But we will fight," said Sam, stoutly. "And if it comes to dying, we will die together, and the enemy will make nothing by it."

"Ha! dey's startin' a fiah down dar by the spring," said Ike, who had been peering through the darkness in the direction the Apaches had taken.

This was true. A column of luminous smoke, followed by a fountain of sparks and flame, shot into the calm night air near the spring.

The Indians were using the fuel Ike and Wah Shin had gathered, and by the light of the dancing flames their slender, half-naked figures could be seen.

Sam counted thirteen warriors. All appeared to be well armed with rifles, and the red paint on their faces told that they were out on no mission of peace.

"I will go out and try to learn their purpose," said Ulna, as he slung his rifle on his back, and tightened his belt.

"But they may catch you," said Sam.

"I will see that they don't."

"Can you understand them if you hear them speak?"

"Yes, as well as if they were Utes. It is better that I should go, and if I find that it will be wiser not to return, remember I shall either escape to Hurley's Gulch, or stay so close that I can be of service if needed. But, if it can be avoided, do not bring on a fight with these people."

Sam was about to protest against Ulna's course, but

before he could utter a word the young Ute had sprung lightly over the rocks, and was making his way to the spring.

For the first time since leaving Gold Cave Camp Sam Willett felt thoroughly alarmed.

He had fearlessly faced the storm and stood undaunted in the presence of Nature in her most awful aspects, without losing heart for a moment, but the presence of these savages—ignorant and bloodthirsty—made him tremble for the safety of his dear father, to whose rescue he was straining every nerve to come.

Ulna's daring and seemingly reckless conduct filled Sam with alarm, for apart from his great regard for that youth, he knew that he could not offer a strong resistance to the Apaches with only the inexpert Ike and Wah Shin to depend on.

"I wouldn't ha' did wat Ulna's done," said Ike, in a frightened whisper. "No, not for fifty hundred thousand million dollars in goold an' solit dimeints."

"No catchee dis chile do so much like foolee," said Wah Shin, with a shudder at the thought.

"Hist! Keep still and stop the dog's growling," said Sam sternly, as from his perch, higher up, he tried to make out what the Indians were doing down by the fire, and if possible to discover Ulna.

Meantime Ulna, moving as silently as the shadows that came and went about the fire near the spring, made his way toward the enemy.

He walked so erect and quickly that it would seem as if it were his purpose to go directly to the fire, but he took care to keep a rock between him and the enemy.

When within fifty yards of the spring he dropped on his hands and knees, and without stopping, crept quickly forward.

When he got so close to the fire that he could distinctly hear what the Apaches were talking about, he came to a stop, and lying close to the ground, he bent eagerly forward to listen.

The leader of this band was a man named Blanco, which is the Spanish word for white, though in this case it seemed to be misapplied.

Blanco's repulsive appearance was increased by the fact that he had only one eye--like Badger.

The chief and his companions had already discovered that the spring had been recently visited, and they very naturally inferred from the tracks of shoes that they had been made by white men.

Nor did the impress of the moccasins escape their keen eyes.

"One Ute, three white men," were the first words Ulna heard when he got within hearing distance of the Apaches.

"Where did they come from?" asked a brave, who by the aid of a torch had been examining the tracks lower down the ravine.

"It looks as if they came by way of the Great Cañon," said one.

"Ugh!" grunted Blanco, "I don't believe that."

"But the trail leads that way," persisted the man who held the torch.

"I don't care if it led into the sky."

"If if did, Blanco, you could not see it, and though our medicine-men say that people in the times far past came from the sky, I never heard of their bringing dogs with them," said the man with the torch.

"Dogs!" exclaimed the band in chorus.

"No; one dog."

"Where is it?" asked the chief.

"Here is the track," and the man held the torch down and showed the impress of Maj's feet on the ground.

"No, that's a wolf," said the chief.

"The foot of the mountain wolf is not so large," said the keen observer, "nor has it long hairs on its toes as has the creature that made this track."

Like all leaders, the chief did not like to be so openly contradicted by one under him, and he was again about to protest that he was right, and it was a wolf that had been at the spring, when, as if to set all doubts at rest, the fierce barking of a dog could be heard at the top of the hill and not more than two hundred yards away.

Maj, in some way, had slipped his muzzle and escaped Ike's hold and was now making himself heard outside the rocks, among which Sam and his friends were hiding.

The instant the Indians heard the sound they seized their arms and sprang away from the light of the fire.

As luck, rather than design, had it, they ran in the direction where Ulna was hiding, and before he could think of rising to his feet they were about him.

The brave fellow stuck close to the ground, and he

might have escaped had not one of the Apaches stumbled and fell on top of him.

The savage gave a yell of fear, but at the same instant he seized Ulna and held him fast.

"What is wrong there?" demanded the chief, as he hurried in the direction from which the cry came.

"A Ute! a Ute!" was the response of the man whom Ulna was making a desperate effort to cast off.

In an instant every brave had fallen on Ulna, and, almost as quickly, he was bound hand and foot, but he uttered neither cry nor groan to show the pain nor to tell of his mental anguish.

"Who are you?" asked Blanco, bending over him.

"I am a Ute," was the reply.

"Have you a name?"

"I have."

"What is it?"

"Ulna."

"What! the nephew of the hated Uray?"

"The nephew of the great chief, Uray."

"You come alone?"

"No, with friends."

"Utes?"

"No, miners from Gold Cave Camp."

"How came you here?"

"Through the cañon."

"And you want me to believe that?"

"I ask you to believe nothing; I tell the truth," said Ulna proudly and half-defiantly.

"Who ever went through the Great Cañon and lived?" said the Apache in a calmer tone.

"We have," said Ulna.

"How many of you?"

"Four and a dog."

"And where are the others?"

"They are where they can defy a foe or welcome a friend," said Ulna with undaunted spirit.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE TRIAL ENDS.

MR. WILLETT, like every American of intelligence, not only knew a great deal about the laws of the country of which he was proud of being a citizen, but he also knew as well as most lawyers the methods by which trials were conducted in the regularly organized courts of justice.

In addition to this he saw that the men who had gathered to try him and Hank Tims, though anxious to follow the forms as they understood them, were very ignorant, and like all their class, had a profound respect for those who knew more, or seemed to know more, than themselves.

The jury was composed of twelve rough, sturdy men, who looked as if they fully realized their duty.

Even the judge sat more erect and tried to look dignified at the risk of being ridiculous.

"Now we're all ready to begin, and I want order in the court. The gents as has thar hats on will take 'em off and hold 'em in thar hands," said the judge, again rapping with the heavy glass on the little pine table by his side.

The "gents" promptly took off their hats, and this

was followed by the scraping of boots and a chorus of little coughs that told how nervous all were.

"Now," continued the judge when order was restored, "we'll have the witnesses in and go on with the trial."

"Before you call any witnesses," said Mr. Willett, "I want you or whoever is conducting this case to state the charge against me and my friend Hank Tims."

"We can't have everything har like if it was a reg'lar out-and-out court," said the judge angrily, and again picking up the tumbler as if he were going to hurl it at some one. "And as for the charges, I thought every one in and about Hurley's Gulch knowed that you two is charged with robbin' and murderin' poor Tom Edwards. Thar, I hope that statement of the case will suit the most partic'lar."

"I and my companion, being the most interested," said Mr. Willett, with wonderful calmness, "should be the most particular; but if that is the best statement of the case that can be made, I am willing that you shall go ahead, asking only that I be permitted to cross-question any and all witnesses that may be called."

"This court ain't got any objections as it knows on to yer axin' questions, pervidin' you stick right down to the point," growled the judge.

Nodding to show that he was satisfied with this, Mr. Willett said, "I am ready," and the young man acting as clerk called out:

"Badger!"

Badger moved nearer to the judge and began to twirl his hat in his big, rough hands in a way that showed he was anything but calm.

"Now, Badger," said Judge Jacks, "tell this yar court and this yar jury all you know 'bout the case."

Badger looked into his hat as if he saw something there that might refresh his memory, and then, after coughing and casting his malignant eye up at the ceiling, he began:

"Wa'al, this is 'bout all I knows 'bout this case. You see, me and Tom Edwards had been ole pards, and so I knowed him as well as any man this side the Rockies. He wasn't a bad kind of a feller to them as knowed how to take him, and though he didn't have much book larnin'——"

Here Mr. Willett interrupted Badger to say:

"This evidence, your honor, is not to the point. We are not here to discuss the character of the dead man, but to find out if we can who murdered him."

"Reckon yer right," said the judge, and then he told Badger he must "stick to bottom facts."

Thus admonished Badger resumed:

"Me and Mr. Shirley got to Hurley's Gulch the night before Tom was did for so cruel bad, and we found he was on a spree, and complainin' to every one that Mr. Willett he was a-tryin' to euchre him out of fifteen hundred dollars, as he'd 'greed to pay for the claim over at Gold Cave Camp. Wa'al, the next mornin' 'bout an hour or so afore day me and Mr. Shirley was sleepin' together when we heard two pistol shots and a man a-hollerin' "murder." We hurried out and found poor Tom all shot to pieces. We carried him into this yar hotel, and with his dyin' last breath he told us that it was Mr. Willett

and Hank Tims as did for him. Thar, that's all I knows 'bout the case."

My young readers will notice that there was no oath administered to Badger, nor would such a sacred proceeding have affected in any way the nature of his evidence.

"Now you've heard Badger's evidence," said the judge, with an angry glance at Mr. Willett and Hank. "Have you any questions to ax him?"

"I have a few," said Mr. Willett."

"Well, rattle 'em off quick."

"Badger," began Mr. Willett, "what is your business?"

"I'm a miner," was the answer.

"Where do you mine?"

"I ain't at work—jist now."

"How long have you been at Hurley's Gulch?"

"Off and on, 'bout a month."

"You came here broke?"

"Yes. I wasn't flush, I'll allow."

"But you are flush now?"

"Wa'al, I've got a few dollars."

"Where did you get your money?"

"That's my business, said Badger, angrily.

"Yes," said the judge, "no gent ain't bound to tell no one how he came by his money—unless some one else goes to work and claims it as his'n."

"My object is to show that Badger received his money from Frank Shirley," said Mr. Willett.

"And what if he did?" asked the judge.

"There is this about it," that if Badger is in Frank Shirley's employ, then he is working to get me and my son out of the way, for if my son dies before he's twenty-one years of age, then Shirley falls heir to a large fortune."

"We ain't a-tryin' Frank Shirley. So I ain't a-goin' to let you ax any sich questions," said the judge, rapping vigorously on the table.

Still calm, if not confident, Mr. Willett asked:

"Badger, were not you and Frank Shirley dressed when you say you heard those shots?"

"Wa'al, yes, except our boots," replied Badger.

"And you were awake?"

"No; but I can't say I was sleepin' heavy."

"*Badger, did not you kill Tom Edwards?*"

This question came with the suddenness of an explosion, and it so staggered Badger that it was fully a minute before he could stammer out:

"No. Who said I did?"

"I say it! You committed the murder at Shirley's bidding, so as to get me out of the way, and you prompted the murdered man whom you shot down in the darkness to say I did it," said Mr. Willett with a forceful manner that startled all.

During the confusion that followed this bold but perfectly just accusation, Badger left the witness-stand and mixed in with the astonished crowd.

Frank Shirley was next called, but as his evidence was much the same as that given by Badger, it is unnecessary to record it.

On his cross-examination, he claimed to have no ill-feeling against Mr. Willett or his son; and he had the boldness to claim that he did not want young Sam's fortune, as he was rich in his own right.

Two other witnesses were called to prove the dying words of Tom Edwards, and on these and the fact that Mr. Willett had no evidence to prove that he had paid for the claim at Gold Cave Camp, the whole case hung.

Mr. Willett testified in his own behalf.

He told such a clear, straightforward story that, for the time being, even his enemies were impressed with its truth.

In a tremulous voice he spoke about his beloved son, whom he feared to be dead, and he said, in conclusion:

"Had it not been for the cruel flood that snatched from me my boy, the only tie that holds me to earth, he would have been here with the paper bearing Tom Edwards' signature, and then you would have seen that I could have no reason for desiring the death of this man, whose drunkenness made him his own worst enemy."

After this Hank Tims told all he knew, corroborating Mr. Willett, and boldly asserting that he was present when Mr. Willett paid the money to Tom Edwards.

Collins and Si Brill testified that they had known Hank "off and on" for many years, and that no man, up to this time had ever dared to say a word against his truthfulness or honesty.

"Wa'al," said the judge, when the evidence was all in, "I give it as my opinion, that them two men, Willett and Tims, kilt Tom Edwards. I don't believe thar

stories for a minute. Men that commit crime will lie to hide it every time, and don't you gentlemen of the jury go for to make any mistake about it.

"Thar, that's all I've got to say. Now let the jury take thar time and fetch in a verdict that'll suit all hands. I ain't got anythin' more to say. The evidence is all in, and so, till the time comes to say the prezners is guilty or innocent the trial is jest 'bout over."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE APACHES HAVE THEIR WAY.

IF AN earthquake had shaken the rocks about his ears, Sam could not have been more shocked and startled than he was at the barking of the dog.

As for Ike, he was rendered speechless, for Maj had darted away without any apparent effort to hold him back.

"Ah, golly!" gasped Wah Shin, "de fat am allee gone in de file!"

Although Maj had done all the damage possible, for Sam could see by the movements of the Indians that they had heard the barking, yet he did not provoke his young master to anger.

Sam sprang down, caught the dog by the collar and pulled him back to their hiding place.

"I—I wish we'd a left dat ar dorg back home!" cried Ike. "He ain't did no good eber sence we started, but to eat up de grub; an' now he goes an' makes a fuss, jest whin we most wanted foh him to keep his tongue to hisself."

"See that he does not get out again," said Sam. "After all the dog only led the Indians to a discovery which they must have made sooner or later. Ah, I

wish Ulna had not gone out. He knows the habits of these people and he would know what to do."

"De man as knows what to do ondah dese yer sarcumstances," groaned Ike, "is a heap sight smarter'n me."

"Plenty men know heap mo' den you," said Wah Shin, who was evidently in a bad humor. "You don' know 'nuff gettee in out lain."

"Hist! Keep still," said Sam, who had again clambered to his perch on the rock that commanded a view of the fire. "I can see men coming this way."

"Oh, laws a massy!" cried Ike, and with one hand he held the dog, while with the other he pressed his lips, "to keep from hollerin' right out," as he afterward expressed it.

Sam was not mistaken as to the movements of the Apaches. A number of them, led by their chief, had left Ulna in charge of the others and advanced boldly to the head of the ravine.

As a proof that they had no fear of the party they were in search of, one of the braves carried a torch, which he brandished above his head till he seemed to walk amid a fountain of sparks.

Taking a position where he could see without being seen, Sam, with an anxiously beating heart, watched the oncoming braves.

They approached to within about fifty yards of the rocks in which the little band had sought refuge, and came to a sudden halt.

Sam was wondering what would happen next, when, to his great surprise, the chief called out:

"Hello, white mans! Hello!"

The Indian spoke broken English in a way that no combination of letters could give a correct idea of, so for our own convenience, as well as for the reader's clearer understanding, we shall report what he said in the ordinary way, though Indians never use the elegant language some writers put into their mouths.

"What do you want?" was Sam's response to the Indian's outcry.

"Who you are?" asked the Indian.

"My name is Sam Willett."

"Where you come from?"

"From the cañon."

"Oh, no; that's a Ute lie."

"I did not ask you to believe me, nor do I care to talk to you. Go off about your business, if you have any," said Sam, his confidence increasing every moment that he spoke.

"You got dog?"

"Yes."

"Big dog?"

"A very big dog."

"Him bite?"

"Yes, if you come nearer."

"That dog fat?"

At this question the Indians laughed and jumped about, as if they thought their chief had uttered a very fine joke, for to the Apache a fat dog is the daintiest dish in all the world.

Sam treated the inquiry about Maj's condition with

haughty silence, while all the time the animal under consideration was growling and straining to break away from Ike, as if eager to exhibit his condition and his teeth.

"You all white men?" was Blanco's next question.

"No—not all," shouted Sam.

"Who you three be?"

"I shan't tell you."

"Why you no tell?"

"Because it is none of your business."

"Dat am de gospil truff," said Ike, "an' if he don't light out purty soon dar'll be a loose dog a-howlin' 'round, for I can't hold onter Maj much longer."

"My name Blanco. Me big Apache chief."

"Well, what do you want?" asked Sam.

"Me very good man."

"I am glad to hear it."

"Me and all my men, g friends to whites."

"And I am a good friend to the Indians; if you let me alone, I shall let you alone. Good-night," said Sam, hoping that the Indian might prove sensitive and take this as a hint to leave, but he had entirely mistaken his man.

"When sun come up then where you go?" asked the chief, with the same inquisitive manner.

At this juncture it struck Sam that he might be able not only to make these people his friends, but to utilize them in getting to his father, so he said in a kindlier tone than he had yet used:

"We are going to Hurley's Gulch."

"You live there?"

"I want to get there. Do you know the *shortest* road?"

This was asked as if Sam might be well acquainted with the longest road himself.

"Oh, yes," said the chief.

"If you guide me—by the shortest way—to Hurley's Gulch to-morrow morning, I will give you money, rifles, pistols, knives, blankets, and lots of other good things," said Sam with lavish generosity.

"You got money, rifles, knives, blankets, all good things with you here, eh?" asked the chief.

"We have all the arms we need for our own defense, and we know how to use them. But you guide me to Hurley's Gulch, and I will keep my word," said Sam, with more confidence than he felt.

Instead of replying at once to this generous proposition, the chief spoke with his followers for some minutes in low, guttural tones.

Sam could hear the murmur of their voices, and he rightly guessed that they were discussing whether to accept his offer in good faith, or to kill and rob himself and his companions.

"We see you, sun up; you no leave," called out the chief at length.

"You must make up your mind to-night, for I am going to leave early in the morning," said Sam.

"Oh, all right. I on hand," was the chief's reply.

Again they consulted together, and Sam could see that four men remained behind to watch, while the others, with the chief, went down to the fire.

All this time Sam was in great trouble about Ulna, for he did not even suspect that he was a prisoner in the hands of his cruel tribal foes.

Ike and Wah Shin were in great tribulation about themselves, for they had no faith in the Indians; indeed, they firmly believed that the Apaches would scalp them all on the morrow.

Ike gave expression to his feelings in the remark:

"When we was down in that yar canyon den I felt ez if I'd rudder be in any odder place in dis worl', or de nex'; but now I'd a heap sight sooner be down dar dan up yar."

Though tired and sleepy, Sam could not think of closing his eyes that night, for he feared to trust Ike or Wah Shin on guard, and he half expected an attack from the Apaches before morning.

He knew that any attempt at escape would be detected, and might hasten the struggle he was so anxious to avoid.

More than once he wished himself back in the cañon, but the thought that he was nearer to his father, and the hope that after all the Indians might not be so bad as he feared, gave him courage to face the future.

He knew that resistance against such a force, and with his own limited supply of food and water, would be downright folly. So when the chief appeared before the rocks, just as the sun was rising, he went out to meet him, and shook hands with him.

"Me come down to water, eat something," said the chief, in what seemed a hospitable spirit.

"Sam went out to meet the chief and shook hands with him"

Sam, Ike, and Wah Shin took up their bundles and with the dog, went back to the spring.

Here to their amazement and horror they found Ulna lying near the fire with his hands and feet bound.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BOLD MOVE.

WE HAVE already seen that Sam was cool and brave, and such characters but rarely act from impulse. Yet there are times when impulse is more effective than all the calm reasoning in the world, and this was one of them.

On the way to the spring with Blanco, Sam felt very nervous. He did not have much faith in the chief's profession of friendship for the whites, and from what he remembered of Hank Tims' stories about the Apaches, he believed them to be a very treacherous and blood-thirsty people.

But the sight of Ulna, prostrate and bound, scattered all Sam's fears and indecision to the winds.

"This is my friend!" he shouted as he sprung to Ulna's side and drew his own hunting-knife.

"Hold! He is a Ute and my foe!" roared the chief.

But neither his words nor his movements could stay Sam Willett, who was now blind to everything but the condition of his brave friend.

Two rapid flashes of the knife, and the cords that bound Ulna's hands and feet were severed.

Ike and Wah Shin trembled at the audacity of their young leader.

Even Blanco and his braves were speechless and helpless for the moment, and looked from one to the other, as if wondering what this extraordinary young white man would do next.

They had not long to wonder, for Ulna, in the very second that he was freed, sprang to his feet, leaped at the nearest Indian, who chanced to hold the repeating-rifle that had been taken from himself the night before, and tearing it from his grasp, he bounded up the ravine before a hand could be raised to stay him.

"Shoot! shoot!" cried the chief when he could regain his breath.

"Don't fire!" shouted Sam as, with his own gun raised, he sprang directly in front of the Apaches.

They did not fire, perhaps because it would have been useless, for before they had fully realized the order of the chief and why it was called out, the fleet-footed Ulna had vanished up the rift.

Blanco shouted for the braves to pursue, and on the instant four of the youngest and most active leaped forward, like blood-hounds freed from the leash.

With yells that frightened the dog and made him crouch behind Ike, the Apaches started up the ravine.

Sam was about to follow them, but the chief caught him by the shoulder and said sternly:

"You do heap harm. Stay!"

Meanwhile, Ulna had gained the upland, with his face turned toward the sun, now flashing over the crests of the Sierra Madre Mountains.

The cruel cords had cut into his wrists and ankles, and the strained position in which he had been held so many hours had stiffened his limbs; but, absorbed in the battle for his own life, he forgot or did not feel his pain.

On gaining the upland, he halted for an instant to pull his cap lower and to tighten his belt; then, as he heard the blood-curdling yells behind him, he started off again, running this time straight for the mountains to the east.

He looked back for an instant, to see the four Apaches rising into view from the rift.

He had about two hundred yards the lead, and he very wisely made up his mind not to increase it.

As a tribe, the Utes have ever prided themselves on the speed and endurance of their runners.

They begin to practice as children, and they are taught to stop at no obstacle and not to vary their speed, whether facing or descending a hill.

They keep the lips firmly closed, breathing altogether through the nostrils, and the arms, or at least the elbows, are kept firmly pressed to the sides, the hands being advanced at right angles to the body and the fingers shut, like a boxer's fist.

An observer, seeing Ulna's light, springy bound and the absence of all effort, would have been charmed with the grace of the youth's movements, but would have felt that he was not getting over the ground very fast, while his pursuers appeared to be flying; and they were certainly straining every nerve.

But Ulna's feet were on his native heath, and he knew that his safety depended on reserving his strength, rather than exhausting himself by a mighty effort at the start.

The four runners behind him discharged their rifles, but the bullets whistled harmlessly by his ears.

They yelled, and he heard them with a feeling of delight, for he well knew that men cannot run fast and yell very loud at the same time.

Still the Apaches seemed to gain on him, till his lead was reduced to not more than fifty yards, and he could hear their loud explosive breathings behind him.

Gradually three of the young braves began to lessen their speed and drop to the rear, while one appeared to gain at every bound on the fugitive.

After running for more than hour, Ulna threw a quick glance over his shoulder and took in this state of affairs.

His heart bounded with delight at the prospect, but he neither increased nor lessened his speed. His movements seemed to be as even and tireless as the flight of the mountain eagles circling above his head.

Another half hour and he looked back again. Only one man was in sight, and he was not more than a hundred feet away.

Quick as a flash Ulna came to a halt, wheeled and fired. The Apache threw up his arms and fell senseless at the feet of the young Ute.

Here Ulna's training in the missionary school at Taos came into play.

His natural impulse would have led him to make sure work, and tear the black scalp from the head of his foe, but his heart was touched with pity rather than hate, and now that his pursuer was harmless he might help him, if he was not fatally wounded.

He examined the Apache's wound, and found that the bullet had struck his head without breaking his skull.

"He will come to himself after a while," said Ulna, as he drew his foe to the shadow of a rock and placed his back against it.

But while prompted to this act of humanity, Ulna did not permit his heart to interfere with his head. According to all the rules of civilized warfare, the arms of an enemy belong to his conqueror, so he took the Apache's pistol and ammunition-belt, which also contained his long, keen scalping-knife.

These he fastened on his own person, and had scarcely finished when the wounded brave opened his eyes and looked about him in a dazed way. As soon as he saw Ulna he closed his eyes again and began to chant in a low solemn voice the death-song of his tribe.

He was in the power of his foe, and as he could not give mercy himself, for he did not know of such a thing, he expected that the Ute would put him to death, and his song told that he was ready to meet it without fear.

"Listen to me," said Ulna, laying his hand on the Apache's shoulder and speaking in a firm but kindly tone. "I am a Ute, but the whites have taught me to

hate no man because of his tribe. Your life is your own; take it and make your way back to your friends who have lagged in the race, and tell them that the nephew of Uray does not hate nor kill the helpless."

"But I am an Apache. I have forfeited my life. I would take yours if I could. Why stay your hand? This is not the warfare that our fathers practised," said the astonished Apache.

"No, nor shall I ever practice such a warfare. Yet for the life I spare I would ask a favor."

"What is it?"

"Return to Blanco and tell him that the people now in his hands mean no harm. Tell him that if he guides them to Hurley's Gulch he will be well paid. Tell him that if he harms them, the whites will make war, nor stay their hands while there is an Apache left in the Mogollon Mountains."

With the last word Ulna waved his hand to the brave and sped away again to the eastward with the same tireless spring.

Ulna was miles away when the three Apaches, who had started out with the wounded man, made their appearance.

"Where is the Ute?" they asked.

"Gone," was the reply.

"And your arms?"

"They are gone, too."

"Who took them?"

"The Ute."

"Why then did he not take your life and your scalp?" they asked in great surprise.

"He stunned me with a shot which I was not expecting; but he stunned me more when he refused the death I was expecting," said the brave.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE VERDICT AND SENTENCE.

IN ORDER that the jury might think over and discuss the evidence against Mr. Willett and Hank Tims it was decided to leave them in full possession of the tent in which the trial was held.

"When you've got yer minds made up," said the man who had been acting as judge, "let me know, and I'll come in and pass sentence."

This fellow had started out to convict the accused men, and, as we have seen, he let slip no chance to impress his prejudices on the jury.

Collins and Si Brill with two others, who had been the original guards, took charge of the prisoners while the jury were making up their minds, though Badger insisted that he should have the prisoners in his keeping.

"If I ain't to have 'em," he protested, "whar was the good of 'lectin' me sheriff?"

"Not a bit of good," sneered Collins, "and if you'd had any spunk you wouldn't have took the place. Now, take my advice and git."

Badger did "git," that is, he sought out Frank Shirley, whom he found in the bar-room surrounded by a great

crowd of men, who were drinking at his expense and discussing the verdict at the same time.

It seemed to be the opinion of nearly all present that the jury would soon bring in a verdict of "Guilty of the crime charged."

"If they don't do that," said the landlord, "then I'll tell you what I'm in for."

"What's that?" asked Badger.

"I'm in for hangin' every man on the jury, and the prizners with 'em, before the sun sets."

A cheer showed the favor with which this proposition was received.

When Shirley could get away from the crowd, he and Badger went down by the creek where they could talk without being overheard.

"Well, Badger, what do you think?" asked Shirley.

"'Bout the verdict?"

"Yes."

"No one can't think but one way after the evidence. Why, nothin' could be stronger."

"That's so; but do you think any one suspects?" asked Shirley, nervously.

"Suspects what?"

"That we put up the whole job."

"Not a soul," said Badger.

"I wish I could think that."

"But you can think it."

"You forget what Mr. Willett asked you when he was cross-examining."

"What was that?"

"His question was, '*Badger, did not you kill Tom Edwards?*'"

As Frank Shirley repeated these words he looked into Badger's face and saw the color flying and the thick lips trembling.

"Why do you speak in that kind of a way to me?" stammered Badger. "Ain't I stuck by you and did what I said? And so far as the killin' of Tom Edwards is consarned, didn't you help plan the job, and didn't you stand by while I carried it out?"

"That is all true, Badger; but I am not going back on you——"

"Then why do you speak that way?"

"Because I want you to understand that Willett suspects the whole truth. Indeed, he stated the case from beginning to end as if he knew all about it."

"Wa'al, if he does, I didn't tell him."

"Of course not, Badger; but you must see that those who think Willett and Hank Tims innocent will at once say, 'Some one killed Tom Edwards, and we should find the guilty parties.'"

"And that's the thought that skeers you?"

"I must confess, Badger, it makes me feel very uneasy, said Shirley.

"I thought you had more nerve."

"I am not lacking in that, but caution is better than nerve; and I've been thinking that the sooner we can get out of this place the better."

"I'll allow yer right thar, Mr. Shirley; but if we was to get away in a hurry, them that suspects us would foller

up and hunt us down like wild beasts. Why, Collins, he's jest a spilin' to have a fuss with us, and I'm bound that he shan't, for he's powerful ugly with a six-shooter."

"Still, I want to get away. There is no doubt in my mind as to the fate of young Sam."

"Thar shouldn't be, for thar ain't no more doubt about him and all the rest of his gang bein' drownded than thar is that that jury over thar will bring in a verdict of guilty," and Badger jerked his head in the direction of the canvas hotel.

"And they will hang the prisoners?"

"You can bet they will, and in short order, too."

"To-day?"

"Yes, to-day."

"Then my mission will be accomplished, and it would be folly to stay an hour in this savage hole if I can get out of it and go to wealth and friends."

"And I'll stick by you, no fear of that, leastwise till I get my share of the swag, and then I think I'll marry and try to lead a more decentish life than I have been doin'——"

Badger was stopped in his statement of good resolutions by a loud cheer coming from the hotel.

"Halloo! what's that?" asked Shirley.

"It must be the vardict; let us go and see," replied Badger, and he at once started off in the direction of the noise, followed by his nervous employer.

Badger was right in his guess.

The jury had sent out word that they had agreed on a verdict.

The preceding excitement was great, but it was calmness itself compared with that that stirred the miners when it became known that the jury were ready to report.

From the bar and the tents and huts round about men poured into the place of trial.

Badger had to run to get up in time, for he did not see how business could go on without the presence of the sheriff.

Mr. Willett and Hank Tims sat in the place they had occupied during the trial.

The judge, flushed with liquor, took his place and rapped and shouted for order.

The twelve jurymen and the prisoners were the only calm persons present, and even their faces showed that they fully appreciated the situation.

When the judge, after breaking the heavy glass and splintering the little pine table by his side had succeeded in getting the mob down, he turned to the jury and said:

"Gents, have you got a verdict?"

"Yes," coughed the one acting as foreman.

"All unanimous?"

"Yes."

"Wa'al, let's have it," said the judge.

The silence became profound on the instant.

Men with watches could hear them ticking, and men with hearts became painfully aware of the fact.

Though a big, strong fellow, the foreman was trembling when he rose to his feet, and he tried to cough.

behind his hand several times before he could get control of his voice. At length he managed to say:

"We find that the two prezners is——"

Here he stopped and coughed again, and he undoubtedly would have sat down without finishing the sentence had not the judge shouted:

"Wa'al, the prezners is what?"

"GUILTY!" came the reply.

On hearing this Badger tried to lead a cheer with the help of the judge, but as the farce was not yet over, some one cursed him and told him to "shut up."

"I don't well see how you could fotch in any other vardict," began the judge. "Fact is, you couldn't have did it and continued to live among the people at Hurley's Gulch that's in for law and order and fair play; so I say you've all done yer duty nobly like good feller citizens."

This opinion met with some applause; then the judge turned to Mr. Willett and Hank, and in a voice intended to be very solemn, as it certainly was very hoarse, he called out:

"Presners at the bar stand up!"

The two men rose, and Mr. Willett cast a quick glance over the crowd in the hope of seeing the friendly faces of Collins and his partner, Si Brill, but they were not in sight.

"Have either of you men anythin' to say why I shouldn't now pass sentence of death on you?"

"Only this," said Mr. Willett: "that you will pass sentence of death on innocent men."

"It is the sentence of this court that the committee and

the sheriff of this yar court take you two prezners out of this place at once and hang you both till you are dead, dead, dead!" said the judge, with a fierce emphasis on the last word.

CHAPTER XXX.

SURPRISE FOR HURLEY'S GULCH.

ON HEARING the cruel sentence, something like a gasp of pain came from many of the men who most firmly believed in the guilt of the prisoners.

No man can ever become so degraded and hardened as not to be moved by the approaching death of even a perfect stranger.

Badger alone was delighted at having something to do with the trial, for it was the sheriff's duty to attend to the execution.

With the death of these two men, the work which he had pledged Shirley to do would be completed.

More than this, with the death of these two men he felt that all danger to himself would vanish and all suspicion be allayed.

"It's mighty hard lines, Mr. Willett," said Hank Tims as he shook his fellow-prisoner's hand, "but one has to die sooner or later, and it should comfort you and me at this time to know that we can leave this world and stand in the presence of the Great Master and Chief of all, feelin' that we ain't never done anythin' that should bring a blush of shame to our cheeks nor a pang of regret to the friends as is left behind."

"True, Hank, true," said Mr. Willett as he stroked

his brow. "Since I have come to feel that my boy is dead, life has lost all its charms for me and death its terrors. What is there to live for since he is gone? Nothing!" and with a sigh of resignation Mr. Willett let his hands fall heavily by his side.

Badger, judging by his conduct on this occasion, must have had no little experience in lynching affairs. He appeared before the prisoners with ropes, and as resistance would have been useless, Mr. Willett and Hank permitted the heartless wretch to tie their hands tightly behind their backs.

This over, he went to the members of the vigilance committee, who were engaged in earnest conversation outside the tent.

Having told them what he had done, Badger asked for instructions.

"We're in a kind of a fix about this onpleasant business," said one.

"Wot's the trouble?" asked Badger.

"Thar ain't no trees big enough for the purpose within twenty miles of this," said the man.

"Then why can't they be blindfolded and shot?" asked Badger.

"'Coz the judge said to hang 'em."

"Wa'al, I don't think thar'll be any trouble in gettin' him to change his mind," said Badger. "You see he must 'commydate the sentence to the place."

The vigilance committee meant to do right, and they were determined to erect a scaffold on the cliff above the creek, and carry out the sentence as it had been ordered.

By the time these preparations were completed the sun was well down the west.

Another hour and darkness would fall upon the world and on the lives of the condemned men.

With more thoughtfulness than might have been expected from men of their character, the crowd withdrew from the place in which the trial had been held, leaving Mr. Willett and Hank alone.

It is not for us to attempt to describe the secret thoughts and feelings of the condemned men.

They spoke but little.

Once Hank looked about him and said:

"I wonder what's become of Collins and Si Brill, they were kind to us, and I'd like to shake hands with them and thank them before the ind comes."

"They must know how we feel toward them, Hank, and as to their absence, it is my belief that they have gone away to avoid witnessing the death—the murder of two innocent men that they are powerless to prevent," said Mr. Willett.

"Yes, that must be it. Wa'al, I never saw a lynchin' nor took part in one, but I must confess I'd die a sight easier if I only knowed that them two critters, Badger and Shirley, was sure to meet up with the ind they deserve."

"You may be sure, Hank, that justice will overtake them in the end. Standing as you are, on the edge of the grave, would you exchange places with either of these men?"

"No, not if they was to throw in all the goold in the world to boot," said Hank earnestly.

"Then you see there is something which a good man dreads more than death, Hank."

"Yes, Mr. Willett, it's a black character and a black heart.

Hank had just uttered this when the flap of the tent was pushed aside and Badger entered, followed by a number of the committee.

"Wa'al, gents," said Badger, "we're all ready."

"And so are we," said Mr. Willett, as he and Hank rose to their feet and stood side by side.

"This ain't pleasant work," said one of the committee with a face and manner that told he was heartily ashamed of his part in the business, "but it's got to be did."

Neither Mr. Willett nor Hank made any reply.

Badger and the members of the committee were all armed to the teeth, and forming about the prisoners, they marched them down to a platform tnat projected over the cliff and from the further end of which two ropes hung down.

About this platform every man living in and about Hurley's Gulch, excepting Si Brill and Collins had gathered, even Frank Shirley, weak and wicked, could not resist the temptation to see his cruel work completed.

The ropes were made ready and the condemned men were told they could pray for five minutes.

Instead of kneeling down both turned their faces to the setting sun, and in all that crowd no one was calmer than they.

Suddenly the painful stillness was broken by a cry

that came from the westward and the crowd, as one man turned in that direction.

There, like a silhouette against the red face of the setting sun, they saw a lithe figure, in the picturesque garb of a Ute Indian bounding toward them.

"It is Ulna!" some one shouted, "Ulna coming from the direction of the great cañon!"

"Hold! hold! hold! for your lives!"

This was shouted by a dozen stalwart horsemen, Collins and Si Brill in the lead, who came galloping to the place of execution from the east.

As these men flung themselves from their saddles, Ulna, with compressed lips and flashing eyes bounded through the crowd.

At a glance he took in the situation, and then in a voice that rang clear and high as a bugle blast along the cliffs he called out:

"Sam Willett lives and he has the paper!"

"And these men shall not die, if me and my friends can help it, and we're inclined to think we can!" thundered Collins, as he drew Mr. Willett and Hank back from the platform and severed the cords that bound their arms.

"And my boy still lives?" cried Mr. Willett, as he reached out his hands to Ulna.

"Yes, he lives; I left him this morning, and——"

Mr. Willett heard no more.

The resolute heart that could face death without a tremor, was all overcome by this joyous revelation, and he fell fainting to the ground.

"That's a Ute lie!" hissed Badger, to whose side Frank Shirley had come, pale and trembling.

While Hank and Si Brill were restoring Mr. Willett to consciousness, Collins called out:

"We'll see if it's a lie. Come, Ulna, my boy, tell us all about it, and if any man tries to stop you I'll give him a chance to bite the end off my revolver."

The coming of the young Ute being unexpected, caused more of a sensation than the execution of the prisoners would have done.

The mob with bated breath gathered about Ulna, and though he was wearied with his run of fifty miles over a rough, trackless country, he told the main points of his thrilling story in a way that convinced everyone of the truth of his report.

For men to go down to death is an old story, but when those mourned for as dead appear in the flesh, even those not superstitious are inclined to wonder and to feel that a miracle has been performed.

"Do you believe that young Indian's story?" asked Shirley after he had led Badger away from the crowd.

"I am afraid it's true," said Badger.

"Then we're beaten!" groaned Shirley.

"Not yet."

"What can be done, Badger?"

"If young Sam is alive he will try to reach here."

"Yes; there can be no doubt of that."

"Then he should be met on the way."

"By whom?"

"By us."

"If so, we should start at once."

"Yes, Mr. Shirley, there is not a minute to spare. Let us get our horses and start as soon as it's dark," said Badger, with unusual determination.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW IT FARED WITH SAM AND HIS FRIENDS.

WHEN darkness came, the night of Ulna's arrival at Hurley's Gulch, it found the camp excited about the existence of Tom Edwards' receipt—which it was claimed young Sam had—and, as a consequence the miners were divided as to the guilt or innocence of Mr. Willett and Hank Tims.

Three-fifths of the men believed that the prisoners were fairly tried, justly condemned and that they should have been hanged.

Indeed, these fellows felt that Collins, Si Brill and the men they had brought with them to prevent the execution were no better than a pack of outlaws.

All the men at Hurley's Gulch carried pistols, as a matter of course, but now they armed themselves with rifles, for the purpose of destroying Collins and his friends, if they did not at once surrender the prisoners.

From comparative peace the camp was plunged into a state of war, with rival factions ready to slay each other, in order that they might take or save the lives of Mr. Willett and Hank Tims.

Leaving Hurley's Gulch to its enraged rival factions, let us turn to the west and see how it fared with Sam Willett and his friends.

In the wild excitement of battle, soldiers, who hitherto may have secretly doubted their own courage, have been known to perform deeds of the most heroic valor, of which they retained not the slightest memory when the conflict was over.

This was Sam's case.

His manner of freeing Ulna was bold to the verge of madness; but the instant he saw the young Ute vanishing at the head of the rift, he forgot all about the manner by which his release had been effected.

The anger of the chief, Blanco, was so great when he saw what Sam had done that he would have slain that daring youth without doubt had he not feared that in so doing he might lose his own life.

"What you do them for?" roared the chief, as he pointed after the fugitive.

"He was my friend," was all Sam could say, for by this time he had only the haziest conception of what he had actually done.

"He was the foe of my tribe."

"You did not know him."

"You do me bad," said the enraged chief. "You take Ute's place. My people no stand what you do. I like be your friend. You friend of Ute's. No my friend."

The chief snapped the fingers of both hands and turned to talk with his remaining braves.

"Mistah Sam! Mistah Sam!" whispered Ike.

"What is it, Ike?"

"W'at you tink now?"

"About what?"

"'Bout de sitooation?"

"I don't know," said Sam gloomily.

"Tink we's in a bad box?"

"If we are we must bear it."

"Jest so; but somehow I'd like a change to good luck, jest to see how it feels like. 'Peers to me ez if we was nebber to hab no good times no more," and Ike rolled his eyes and sighed at a great rate.

"W'at say me cookee blekfas'?" said Wah Shin, in whom the desire to be at work was stronger than his fear of the savages.

"I don't think they'll let you cook," said Sam.

"Den me tly. Dey say 'no,' den me stopee. Let 'em hab way."

Wah Shin opened the bundle, took out the few remaining rabbits, and going over to the fire, he deliberately raked the coals and began to warm the decidedly simple breakfast.

The Apaches offered no objections to the actions of the Chinaman, though they watched him with the eager curiosity of children at a circus.

The Apaches make a bread from the pounded roots of the maguey or mountain aloe, of which they always carry a supply when on their war forays or hunting expeditions.

This bread is sweet and nutritious, and that it will keep for a long time in its original state is shown by the fact that the recorder of these stirring incidents has still in his possession some of this bread, which he obtained in the mountains of Arizona fifteen years ago.

The odor of the rabbits on the coals reached the nostrils of the chief, and it must have soothed his anger somewhat, for he spoke to his companions in the Apache tongue, and they at once pulled a lot of this bread from their buckskin haversacks—it resembled plugs of very black tobacco and tasted better than it looked—and they gave Sam, Ike and Wah Shin each a piece.

"This is all the food we have left," said Sam, addressing the chief and pointing to the rabbits, "but we shall be glad to share with you, and if you guide us to Hurley's Gulch I will pledge my word that you shall have all I promised you before."

The chief replied to this with a grunt that showed he was still far from feeling good-natured, still he proved that he was not only very hungry, but also very selfish, by devouring one of the four rabbits without asking any outside assistance.

Ike witnessed this performance in open-eyed wonder, and he could not resist whispering to Sam:

"I've seed a good many hogs in my time, but that ar Injin as went an' eat a hull rabbit all by hissel', is jest 'bout de biggest one I ebber sot my two eyes on. Dar, he ain't lef' noffin' but de bones."

"When you no have more meat," said the chief, coming over and standing before Sam, while he cast a covetous look at Maj, "then I tell you what you do."

"What?" asked Sam.

"Don't you like the dog?"

"Oh, yes," said Sam, thinking that the Indian who

could like dumb creatures must have a kindly heart. "I am very fond of the dog."

"Then why you no eat him?" asked Blanco.

As Sam had never looked at Maj as something that might be eaten instead of being fed, he was not a little puzzled what to reply, still he managed to say, with an attempt at smiling:

"That isn't the way I like the dog."

"No," said Ike in a low voice, "we likes dog wid de ha'r on an' de bark in him."

All unmindful of this discussion Maj went on eating the bones that had been thrown to him and looking as if he had room for a great many more than were in sight.

After this very informal meal was over the chief gave an order to his own people and then told Sam that he and his friends must follow him.

"Where to?" asked Sam.

"We see, me don't know," was the surly reply.

As there was no food left, Sam rolled up the blankets and throwing these and the saddle-bags containing the gold dust and the precious paper over his shoulder, started up the ravine.

Ike and Wah Shin followed, the former clinging to his old shot-gun as if his life depended on it.

Eight lithe Indians, none of them burdened with clothes or the world's goods, brought up the rear.

On reaching the uplands the chief came to a halt, the others doing the same, and shading his eyes from the sun, he looked long and eagerly to the eastward.

With a thrill of joy Sam saw that neither Ulna nor

his pursuers were in sight, and well knowing the young Ute's powers as a runner, he had now no fears of his being overtaken.

As if he understood what was passing in the white youth's mind, the chief said:

"You know Ulna long time?"

"Only a few months."

"You like him heap?"

"I do."

"You make him free?"

"I am glad I did," said Sam, boldly.

"Then you take his place like same as he was here," said Blanco, with an angry glint in his eyes.

"I do not understand."

"If Ulna stay we kill him."

"Yes," said Sam, feeling a cold chill and wondering what was coming next.

"But Ulna get away."

"Yes."

"You help him."

"I did."

"Then you take Ulna's place. You all same like Ulna to us. We take you to Apaches, way off," and the chief waved his hands to the south where the purple peaks of the San Francisco range could be seen rising into the bluest of blue skies.

"Would you kill a man because he loved his friend?" asked Sam with a calmness of manner that did not at all indicate his feelings.

"When man's friend my foe—yes."

"But Ulna would not do that."

"You think so."

"I am sure he would not."

"Ha! you don't know Ute."

"I know Ulna," persisted Sam.

"Ulna he like take my scalp."

"I am sure he would not hurt you unless it was to save his own life. The whites have taught him better."

"The whites!" repeated the chief, with a grunt of contempt. "Oh, yes, the whites, heap fine the whites. They take all Apaches' land, kill his wife, kill him when he don't like it. Apache don't go to white man's land; why, then, he comes here we no send for him?"

Sam saw that this was a mixed question to which the answer could not be truthfully given unless it agreed with the Indian's notion of right, still he said evasively:

"All men do wrong at times, but all men should try to do right."

"What is right? what is wrong? White man think one thing, Apache think another thing; no one know. Sit down on stone; I wait till braves come back with Ulna's scalp, then all leave."

Without waiting for any comment, Blanco again snapped the fingers of both hands above his head, and turned away to show he did not care to discuss the subject further.

This conversation took place near the point of rocks in which Sam and his friends had spent the previous night.

On some of the outlying stones Ike and Wah Shin were

seated, eagerly watching the chief, while their faces showed that they were taking anything but a hopeful view of the situation.

"Mistah Sam, w'at you t'ink 'bout dis time?" asked Ike as he placed a blanket for his young master to sit on.

"I hardly know what to think, Ike," was the reply.

"Don't you t'ink we made a mistake?"

"In what way, Ike?"

"By comin' up out ob dat canyon."

"Would you want to stay there forever?"

"Wa'al, not adzackly; but if I had any choosin 'bout it I'd a heap sight rudder be dar dan heah. I neber did hab no use for a Injin nohow. Jest only tink, dey's been a-watchin' an' a-watchin' Maj, an' a-lickin' ob dar lips as if dey was feelin' how he tasted. But if dey gits away wid dat dog den dey'll hab to steal him whin dis yar chile's asleep," said Ike, and he reached out and pulled the dog nearer to him by means of a rope he had fastened about his neck.

"Dogee, he no so belly bad fol to make eat. Way off Chinaland fat dogee allee same's nice lilly tulkey. Big man he like him muchee heap."

"Wa'al," said Ike, with ludicrous contempt, "I tanks de Great Mastah I ain't a Injun or a Chinee. Dar's only two decent kind ob people; one's black, like me, de odder's w'ite like Mistah Sam. But," he added, with a sigh, "I don't go foh to blame no one jest kase dey's so unfortnit as not to be ob de right culah."

Sam could not keep his mind on the very funny discussion which followed between Ike and Wah Shin, as

to the merits of their respective races. He was thinking of his beloved father, and wondering if he still lived and was waiting for the paper that was to prove his innocence, by showing to the world that he could have had no possible motive for desiring the death of Tom Edwards.

One, two, three hours passed and the fierce sun poured down a blistering heat on the bare rocks, till the hot air rose in shivering, shimmering waves, that distorted every object seen at any distance, and threw into the most fantastic shapes the hills that studded the wide plateau.

Every few minutes Sam looked to the east, expecting the return of the braves who had gone in pursuit of Ulna, but it was not till the sun had been past the zenith more than an hour, that his keen gaze detected four figures—the mirage gave them the appearance of giant spectres—approaching at a deliberate pace.

Blanco made the discovery about the same time, and at once sent a messenger to hurry up the pursuers. He did not need to be told that his braves had not been successful in their mission, for had they been returning with a scalp they would not have been so deliberate in their movements.

When the braves were within a few hundred yards, Blanco ran out to meet them, and seeing that one of them was wounded he said:

"Did the Ute win?"

"He did," replied the wounded man. An antelope could not have kept up with him had he put forth all his speed."

"Yet, you came close enough to him to catch his bullet," said the puzzled chief.

"Yes, and close enough to lose my scalp, if Ulna had cared to take it," said the brave, with a candor but rarely manifested by a savage.

In answer to the chief's desire to learn how this unusual event came about, the brave told frankly and truthfully the whole story, even to the conversation he had with Ulna before he left.

This story evidently had a powerful effect on Blanco, for he stroked his forehead for some minutes, and then said:

"The Utes are changing; the Apaches must change too. I will not harm the young white man who told me the truth."

Turning, the chief strode quickly to the place where Sam was sitting and eagerly watching, and then extending his hand, he said with some feeling in his voice:

"You no tell lie. Ulna is good. Ulna escape. I am glad in my heart, for he no take life one of my braves when he can."

Sam could hardly credit his ears, but there was no mistaking the expression on the swarthy face, despite its half-covering of war paint, so he shook the chief's hand and said with a great sense of relief:

"I told you the truth about Ulna, I tell you the truth about myself. Now guide me to Hurley's Gulch and I will pay you all I promised."

For reasons which he did not state, the chief said he could not go to Hurley's Gulch, but he was willing to

guide Sam part of the way there, and to take all the rifles and other weapons they had with them as part payment, the other things promised to be sent out to a certain point two days after the party reached the Gulch.

These were certainly anything but generous terms, but as Sam was in no humor to press a close bargain, he agreed to them at once.

There was not much preparation to be made. All the canteens were filled with water, and about the middle of the afternoon they began the march for Hurley's Gulch, which the chief said could be reached the next afternoon, though he would leave them in the morning.

With a lighter heart than he had carried for many a day, Sam, with Ike, Wah Shin, and the dog following him in the order named, started off by the side of the chief.

They moved so fast that by dark, when they went into camp in the bottom of a gulch where there was water, they had traveled at least twenty miles.

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN GREATER PERIL STILL.

WITH the first glimmer of day the following morning all were awake, and a very light breakfast was made of the root bread, which the chief distributed with great fairness as far as it went.

As Sam had agreed, he turned over to the chief the rifles, pistols, knives and blankets belonging to his party, keeping back only the canteens, which had been filled with water, and the saddle-bags.

"I should like to borrow my own rifle from you," said Sam, after he had made the transfer, "for it is not safe to travel through this land without a weapon to defend one's self from foe or wild beasts. I shall return it when I send you the other things."

"I let you have dis gun," said the chief, pointing to the old rusty shot-gun that had been the special object of Ike's care and the delight of his heart for so long.

"Take her, Mistah Sam, take her," urged Ike. "Dar ain't anodder gun like her—no, not in all dis yar land."

This was certainly the truth, yet "she" was rather an unreliable weapon to depend on in a trying emergency.

"That is a shot-gun, no good to you or to me. Let me have my own rifle with some ammunition, and I

pledge my life to send it back and six more equally good with it."

"I tell you what I do," said the chief, after some deliberation and a good deal of whispering with his own people.

"What?"

"You got dog?"

"Yes."

"Well, you give me dog, I give you rifle."

Sam had always been attached to Maj, and the adventures they had shared together made him even dearer, so that to lose him would be like parting with a friend; still, he knew that a sacrifice might have to be made.

"What do you want with the dog?" he asked.

"Eat him," grunted the chief.

"I will give you the dog if you pledge me your word that you will not kill him for three days," said Sam, stooping and patting Maj on the head, while the faithful creature, in its turn, licked his hand.

"But we no find game then we get hungry," said the chief.

"You can find game. Agree to this, for the dog is my friend," said Sam with much feeling.

"An' my frien', too," added Ike.

"All right; I no kill for three days," said the chief.

With this understanding Sam received his rifle and the belt containing his ammunition, and one of the Apaches fastened a cord about the dog's neck and dragged the reluctant creature to his own side.

The chief pointed to a distant elevation—it looked to

be only a few miles away, though it was actually thirty or more—and said:

"That mountain back Hurley's Gulch. Go there Keep north side. You find 'em before dark. I come here three days. You bring all things, rifles, pistols, knives, and—and one more thing."

"What is that?" asked Sam.

"Heap tobacco, much lot whisky."

"I will keep my promise," said Sam, who could not but feel that the Indian was decidedly "on the make."

With this understanding Sam and his friends parted from the Apaches, and with their eager eyes fixed on the mountain that marked the site of Hurley's Gulch they hurried on.

The thought that he should meet his father that night gave strength and elasticity to Sam's limbs and filled his heart with a hope that was thrilling in its ecstacy.

He felt that their troubles were near an end, and that before the sun went down his father's innocence would be established, and the little band of Gold Cave Campers would be happily together once more.

He walked with such a long, quick stride that Ike and Wah Shin could only keep up with him by breaking into a dog-trot, that made them puff with the exertion.

"See h'ar, Mistah Sam!" called out Ike, after they had been traveling for two hours and the heat waves began to distort the landscape again. "Does yeh expeck a feller foh to run like a race-horse, w'en he ain't got nothin' in his inside but a bit ob dem dar roots? Foh de Lor', if you keeps up dis yar like all day, you'll fine

yerself alone, foh dis chile's so holler he's nigh done gin out," and Sam came to a halt and wiped his perspiring face with his ragged coat-sleeve.

"Me hungly allee same like Ike, but me no say anytlings," said Wah Shin as he stood panting like a hunted hare.

"I know, boys, that I've been hurrying more than I should in justice to you, but the thought that every step is taking me nearer to my father makes me forget how weary you must be," said Sam, his own brown face showing how the terrible pace told on him.

"Mistah Sam, dar's a sight more reason w'y you should be tireder an' hungrier dan we," said Ike, the better part of his nature asserting itself, as it always did in an emergency. "But we'll git dar long afore dark widout so much hurryin', an' yer fadder'll be a heap sight more pleased if we all shows up fresh an' smilin', eben if we is so holler."

Sam slackened his pace, but he was making fully four miles an hour when under way again.

The water in their canteens became very warm in the blistering heat of that dry atmosphere, but they had to drink, and as a consequence their supply was exhausted by the middle of the afternoon.

They had no food with them, and all were very hungry, but the prospect ahead made them forget their sufferings; for soldiers do not feel the pain of wounds received in the excitement of battle.

Sam reasoned that two hours more would see them at Hurley's Gulch, and had so told his companions, when Ike called out:

"Hello! W'at on earf is dem?"

Sam turned in the direction pointed out by Ike, and to his amazement he saw the forms of four gigantic horsemen; but, instead of their riding along the solid earth, they appeared to be moving far up in the sky.

All were familiar enough with the phenomena of this land to know that the riders were on the ground and that the spectral figures, representing them in the heavens had their origin in the mirage which is so frequent and delusive in this land.

"Ulna has reached Hurley's Gulch, and those must be men who have come to search for us," said Sam after he had surveyed the figures for some seconds.

About the same time the horsemen must have discovered Sam and his friends, for the giant figures could be seen pointing and waving their arms, while the monstrous horses plunged across the sky with mighty bounds.

Again Sam hurried on till he came to a towering rock that commanded from its summit a view of the country round about.

Up this he clambered, Ike and Wah Shin following him with great activity.

On the summit of the rock there were a series of excavations, some of which were partly filled with water left there by the late storm.

This water was comparatively cool, and after drinking till satisfied, Sam looked in the direction from which he expected the riders.

To his surprise, they were only a few hundred yards away, and it did not need a second glance to convince

him that one of these riders was Frank Shirley, and another was the man with one eye who had accompanied him on that day, that seemed so far away, to Gold Cave Camp.

"Surely," he reasoned, "these would not be the men my father would send out from Hurley's Gulch to find me."

Instinctively he felt that the presence of these men meant him no good, and he made up his mind not to place himself in their power till assured that they were friendly.

The two horsemen with Frank Shirley and Badger were the landlord of the hotel at Hurley's, and a wretched creature of the same stripe who had been a partner and friend of Tom Edwards.

"Halloo! Halloo, Sam Willett! We've come out to find you!" called out Shirley when he came within hearing distance.

"Who sent you?" was Sam's salutation.

"Your father."

"How did he know I was here?"

"Ulna told him."

"Then why didn't he or Hank Tims come?"

"There are good reasons why they could not get off, so we have come in their stead. Get down from the rocks; we've been searching for you since before daylight," said Shirley, as he and Badger dismounted from their horses not a hundred feet away.

Slipping into one of the excavations so that he could see what was going on below without exposing himself, Sam called down:

"Frank Shirley, my father never sent you to find me."

"What! do you think Mr. Shirley's a-lyin'?" shouted Badger, at the same time unstringing his rifle and assuming a position as if about to fire.

"Yes, I do," said Sam boldly.

Badger would have fired, though Sam was out of sight had not Shirley laid his hand on his arm and said pleadingly:

"Don't do that, Badger; you'll spill all the fat in the fire. That young fellow has a rifle, and he knows how to use it."

Sam heard all this distinctly and he called out:

"Yes, and I will use it if you fellows don't get back and mount your horses while I count ten. One, two, three, four——"

Neither Shirley nor Badger waited to hear more, for as "one" was called out they saw the muzzle of a rifle pointing down at them from the top of the rock.

With the alacrity of acrobats the two men scrambled into their saddles, and as they did so the word "Two!" rang out."

"There, you see, we want to humor you, and if we were not friends we shouldn't do that," said Frank Shirley, trembling in voice and frame from his recent effort.

Sam's reply showed that he had no faith in this.

"My rifle is good for a half-mile. If you are within reach in ten minutes I'll begin to fire."

"See h'ar, young feller," called out Badger, "do you know what I think of you?"

"No, and I don't care."

"I think you're a devil."

"All right. Start, for the ten minutes have begun."

The four men did start. It would have been nothing less than suicide, the landlord said, to remain there and be shot at, "more particlar whin there was no show to shoot back."

Sullenly the men rode off, and when they had gone out of rifle-reach they came to a halt, and after much swearing all round, Shirley asked:

"Well, gentlemen, what's to be done next?"

"Nothing, till dark," said Badger.

"And what then?"

"Then we ken get at 'em."

"But how?"

"While two of us shoot at the front of the rock to attract 'em, two others can climb up behind and finish the job for good," said Badger.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN A TRAP.

FROM his lookout Sam kept a constant watch on the four horsemen, and he made up his mind from their movements that they were not going back without letting him hear from them again.

"W'at you tink now, 'bout dis time?" asked Ike, who, with Wah Shin, had crept up from one of the excavations to Sam's side.

"I think, Ike, that those men are not our friends," said Sam, pointing to the distant group.

"Dat's jest how I feel. De worl' wouldn't be no wuss off if de earf was to open up an' swaller all dem men an' den come shut agin, like a rat-trap, Mistah Sam! Do you know what I tinks?"

"What is it, Ike?"

"W'en we wuz down in dem canyons, wif de watah all round us an' dem dar big rocks shootin' away up till dey 'peahed to go right frue de sky, den we tinked we wuz in a pooty bad fix, didn't we?"

"So we did, Ike."

"An' den again, w'en we fell in wif dem savage Injuns an' it appeahed as ef dey was bound to hab our skelps, den we tinked as how we wuz in a heap sight wuss fix'n eber?"

"Yes, Ike."

"An' we kinder wished we wuz back in de canyons?"

"That is true."

"Wa'al, does yeh know w'at I tinks now?"

"What is it, Ike?"

"Dat a mean w'ite man is a heap sight meaner dan a mean Injun——"

"My opinion exactly."

"An' dat if I had my choice to be in de comp'ny ob dem four men off dar, or away back wif dem bar-legged 'Paches, as is so powahful fond ob dorg, w'y, I'd go wif de 'Patches ebery time, an' feel might tankful foh de hobertunity."

"I agree with you, Ike."

"But w'at's to be did?"

"We must wait."

"An' starve?"

"We can't get anything to eat here, Ike."

"If we could get suffin' to eat de place'd be a sight pleasanter. I nebber could feel brave w'en I was feelin' holler at de same time," and Ike tightened his belt, and rapped himself on the outside to show he was very much in the condition of a drum.

"Bime by, light way soon we hab night, sun go down, see," said Wah Shin, pointing to the west where a crimson flush marked the spot where the sun had set.

With great anxiety Sam saw the shadows settling over the landscape.

He was now convinced that these men came to do him a harm, and he resolved not to let them come near him

while he had a shot left in his rifle, or he was able to pull a trigger.

He felt this delay more keenly than he had all the obstacles that beset his course since he left Gold Cave Camp to reach his father.

By a perilous and round about way he had come, and when within a few miles of the objective point for which he had struggled so bravely, he found himself stopped by men, who, according to all the laws of humanity, should have been his protectors and friends.

It was much like a brave swimmer's sinking within touch of shore, or a starving man's hand falling helpless by his side when just within reach of food.

But Sam Willett had the courage and the devotion that obstacles could not weaken nor sufferings ever change.

With every trial he grew stronger, more determined to reach the father, who was nearly always in his thoughts, and never for an instant absent from his heart.

To add to the trials of the situation night was coming, and under its cover Sam was now convinced that these men would try to make their way to the top of the rock on which he and his faithful companions had found a refuge.

"I've heerd tell o' war," groaned Ike, "an' I've seed men as fit an' fout, but thar wasn't none of 'em as eber got cornered as we is now. If I wasn't so awful holler I'd kneel down and pray, for if de good Lor' wants to help us He'll neber hab a bettah chance."

"Don't lose heart, Ike. Help will come in good

time," said Sam, with a cheeriness of manner that did not at all indicate his actual feelings.

"I no cannee see how help him can gettee to us, but I no cale. Only can die one time," said Wah Shin, with the stolidity of bearing and that indifference to death which so often distinguishes the Mongolian.

"These men," said Sam, pointing in the direction of the enemy, "knew we were out here before they left Hurley's Gulch."

"It do seem bery much dat way," said Ike, with a sad shake of the head. Then he added: "But I don't see how dey could hab knowed."

"Can't you think of one way, Ike?"

"No, Mistah Sam; foh de life ob me I can't."

"Have you forgotten Ulna?"

"Ulna!" exclaimed Ike.

"Yes; there is no doubt in my mind as to his safety. He has reached Hurley's Gulch, and those men, my father's enemies, have come out, on the strength of Ulna's information, to stop us."

"But why don't some ob our friends show up? Dat's w'at gits me," said Ike, and he rubbed his head vigorously with both hands, as if he might in this way excite his brain into better action.

The question asked by Ike had presented itself to Sam before, but as he could not answer it he did not let it annoy him. Speculation and action do not work in harmony.

While it was yet sufficiently light, Sam Willett, like a careful soldier examining the field on which a life and

death struggle is about to take place, looked over the rock on which they had found refuge and saw its weak points as well as its advantages.

He walked boldly about within sight of the enemy, and the wonder is that they did not risk a shot at him. They certainly would have done so had they not agreed to try the effect of strategy before attempting force.

It did not take Sam long to discover that the summit of the rock was accessible on one side only, and so he very wisely reasoned that that was the only side to be defended in the event of a night attack.

He reasoned further that a rock so conspicuous in the landscape and known to have water on its top must be well known to every one acquainted with that land. Indeed, there was evidence all about him that the place had been frequently visited and used as a camping-ground by Indians and miners, and the chances were that Frank Shirley's companions knew the way to the top.

Ike and Wah Shin were without arms, but it did not take Sam long to discover how their strength and courage could be utilized in defending the position.

Scattered over the crest of the rock there were a great many irregular pieces of yellow sandstone, weighing from a few ounces to fifty pounds, or more, and, properly handled these stones would make very effective ammunition.

People whose hands and brains are occupied do not feel trouble like those who have nothing to do but to think over their woes.

The instant Sam stated his purpose to Ike and Wah Shin, their faces brightened and they went to work with a spirit and energy that made them forget, for the time, that they were very hungry.

They piled the stones four feet high across the narrow turn, up which their assailants must come, and in addition they placed a great heap within reach to be used as ammunition.

By the time these preparations were made, it was quite dark, but the snorting and tramping of uneasy horses and the hoarse voices of men in the distance, told Sam that the enemy were still close by.

"Mistah Sam," whispered Ike, unable longer to stand the strain in silence.

"Yes, Ike."

"How does yeh feel 'bout dis time?"

"All right—considering."

"Not so hungry as yeh was, eh?"

"No."

"Dat's same's me. My heart's beatin' so dat I don't feel so holler——"

"You heap skee-at," grunted Wah Shin.

"Yes, an' I ain't 'shamed to say I is; but if it comes to chuckin' down rocks, you'll see I ken work harder'n you, Wah Shin," said Ike, with spirit.

"Mebbe yes. Mebbe no. Me chuckee rocks w'en Meest Sam he say, 'You go in, Wah.' Me no blag."

"Hist!" interrupted Sam. "Keep silence. They are coming nearer."

On the instant Ike and Wah Shin became as silent as

the grave, and hugged closer to the surface of the rock, but they could hear their own hearts beating like war-drums, and they would not have been at all surprised if told that the men down below could hear them, too.

It was a trying moment, but Sam was equal to the occasion. His ready rifle was protruding through an opening in the wall that commanded the approach. Ike stood at his right hand and Wah Shin on his left, each ready to hurl down the stones on their assailants, when their young commander gave the word.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A BRIEF TRUCE AND WHAT FOLLOWED IT.

AFTER a painful wait, Sam heard voices under the rock, and he braced himself for the expected assault.

The men were evidently consulting, and one was in favor of attacking at once, while the others advised "strategy;" this was the one word that came distinctly to Sam's ears.

At length, Shirley, who was in favor of strategy, stepped back from under the rock and called up:

"Hello! hello! up there!"

"Hello, down there!" was Sam's response.

"Is that you, Sam Willett?"

"It is."

"I want to talk with you."

"Talk away, I am listening."

"Do you know me?"

"No, I don't, and what's more I don't want to," said Sam, with a ring of firmness in his voice that surprised and angered his questioner.

"I am your friend, your cousin," said Shirley.

"You are Frank Shirley?"

"Yes."

"Late of Detroit?"

"Yes, Sam, that's me."

"Well, Frank Shirley, late of Detroit, you may be my cousin, but you are not my friend."

"But why shouldn't I be?"

"Because you are not a gentleman."

"That young feller up there," said Badger, with an oath, "ought to be tarred and feathered and then set on fire and shot at. And if I ever get my hands on him, I'll——"

"Don't," interrupted the landlord, "you'll kick all the fat into the fire. Let Mr. Shirley talk to the boy; he'll get in fine work, if you only keep your mouth shut."

Badger gave vent to his feelings by a series of savage growls, and Shirley, after much coughing to ease his nervousness, proceeded to carry out his strategy.

"See here, Sam Willett!"

"Go on, I hear," was the response.

"I don't mean you any harm."

"And you sha'n't do me any, if I can help it," said Sam.

"If you look away off to the east, you can see lights."

"I know that."

"Do you know where those lights are?"

"I think I do."

"Where?"

"At Hurley's Gulch."

"Your father is there——"

"I am glad to hear it."

"And he is very sick."

"How do you know?"

"Because I saw him in a bad fix to-day."

"See here, Shirley, tell me at once what you want," said Sam, in his spirited way.

"I want to take you to your father; he's been heart-broken, thinking you were dead; so come down, and I pledge you my honor as a gentleman that I will take you to Hurley's Gulch," said Shirley, in accents intended to be reassuring and soothing.

"Your honor as a gentleman?" repeated Sam with a ring of sarcasm.

"Yes, that's what I said."

"And we'll let you three young fellers ride our horses," added the landlord.

"And you will also pledge your honor, as a gentleman, to do that?" said Sam.

"Oh, I'll swear to it," said the landlord.

"Thanks, but the security being false and worthless, I must decline your offer," said Sam, surprised at his own coolness and his ready command of language

"Then you won't come down?" from Shirley.

"Thanks, not to-night."

"Sam Willett!"

"Yes; Frank Shirley!"

"Are you crazy?"

"No, I'm mad; and you'll find I'm dangerous if you bother me further," said Sam stoutly.

"See har, young feller," shouted Badger. "If you don't want us to save you, do you know what we'll do next?"

"I don't."

"Why, we'll get mad, too——"

"I don't care."

"And," continued Badger, his voice choking with anger, "we'll go up thar and fotch you down; and if so be you git hurt, it'll be yer own fault."

"Hurt?" from Sam.

"Yes, and hurted purty bad, too."

"What's your name?"

"My name's Badger. I'm a terror, I am. I was nussed on blizzards, and rocked by tornadoes. I live on rattlesnakes and horned toads, and when I'm riled its wuss nor a earthquake. Now you are gettin' my dander riz, so come down, for if I have to climb up after you, you'll git hurt."

Badger certainly thought that this fierce speech would have a most depressing effect upon the youth in command of the rock, great therefore was his anger and disappointment when he received this reply.

"Before I am hurt some one else will be in the same fix, for I and my companions propose to defend ourselves."

"But why defend yourselves," said Shirley, "when we mean you nothing but good."

"I do not care to give my reasons; but I'll tell you what I've been thinking ever since I started to reach Hurley's Gulch."

"What's that?"

"That you and the one-eyed ruffian who travels with you are the cause of all my father's troubles——"

"That's a lie!" roared Badger.

Sam continued as if he had not heard the interruption.

"And I believe it was you two who killed that wretch, Tom Edwards, in order to get us into a scrape—yes, to get us out of the way. Now get back, or come on, just as you please."

Sam said this in a way that convinced the man below that his resolution could not be shaken, and that any attempt to oust him from his stronghold by force would be met with resistance to the death.

"That young devil up thar's a chip of the old block," hissed Badger. "Why, cuss him, he talks jist like his father. Do you know what my opinion of them two is, Mr. Shirley?"

"What?"

"That they're the hardest, toughest cases I've met up with in my five-and-forty years of mixin' among all classes. Sich people hadn't ought to be let live among decent folks."

"I've seed boys in my time, hundreds and thousands of 'em," said the disgusted landlord, "but that young feller up on top of that rock, for downright gall and bitterness, and bull-headedness, lays over anything I ever saw, heard or red of."

"It is evident to me that Sam Willett will fight; now what are we to do?" asked Shirley in despair, for all prospect of succeeding by "strategy" was gone.

"We must carry out my plan," said Badger.

"What's that?"

"We've got to go back to first principles, jist as I sup-

posed we would when you got talkin' 'bout mildness and strategy——"

"Explain yourself, Badger."

"You and me must face the music, Mr. Shirley."

"Face the music?" stammered Shirley.

"Yes, thar's nothin' else to be did."

"Explain yourself, Badger.

"You and me must creep up the rock on the other side, while Jake and Ned stand off to the east and keep up a fire on the top, so as to distract attention from the p'int we're after. Do you see?"

Shirley said he saw very clearly; but from his manner it was very evident he did not look with approval on this plan of assault.

Physically and morally Frank Shirley was a coward, and though he tried to hide this fact from others, he could not hide it from himself.

But even cowards will fight desperately for their lives, and all Shirley's future, if not his very existence, depended on the success of this monstrous undertaking.

If he failed, then he was an impoverished outcast with the stain of murder on his soul, though all the chances were that if Sam Willett was permitted to reach Hurley's Gulch, the vigilantes would arrest himself and Badger for the death of Tom Edwards.

Quickly he looked over the situation, and his cowardly heart took on a show of courage; it was the courage of desperation, as he realized how much depended on his conduct this night.

"I can't say that I'm much of a fighter, having had

no experience that way," said Shirley with a tremor in his voice. "But, Badger, if you lead the way, I'll follow to the end. We must finish this job to-night."

"If we don't it'll finish us," said Badger grimly.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A NIGHT BATTLE.

SAM WAS astonished when he heard the rifles banging away on the east side of the rock.

He had been looking for a direct attack and so could not understand this move.

"What can they mean; they are certainly bad, but they are not such downright fools as to think they can do us any harm from that quarter," said Sam, thinking aloud rather than asking for the opinion of his companions.

"Mistah Sam."

"Yes, Ike."

"I ken hear de bullets a whistlin' ober head, an' it do 'peah ez ef dey was comin' lower down."

"W'at mattle if dey no comee low nuff down to hult? Let 'em singee, lat's alle lite," grunted Wah Shin, as he crouched closer to the rock, and hugged to his breast a big stone, which he intended to use to the best advantage when the proper time came.

Sam Willett was by instinct a soldier.

This useless attack had a purpose in it, and he was not long in reaching a right conclusion.

To encourage Ike and Wah Shin, he gave them the benefit of his reasoning.

"That firing, off there, is all a dodge," he said.

"Tink dey're shootin' foh fun, Mistah Sam?"

"No, Ike, they are in dead earnest, but their object is to take our attention away from the point of danger."

"De odder side."

"Yes; the attack will be made along the trail leading from the ground to the top of the rock, and we must be prepared for it," said Sam.

Nothing could be gained by heeding the riflemen.

All his sight and strength must now be used to watch and guard the only ascent by which their position could be reached without the highest scaling ladders, and of such mechanical appliances there was no danger.

Sam placed Ike and Wah Shin in position again, and whispered to them not to hurl a stone till he gave the word.

This done he brought his rifle to a half cock, and making sure that his cartridges were within reach, he knelt down with the muzzle of his gun covering the trail.

The dry, still air carried every sound.

Though Badger and Shirley moved with the stealth of Indians, yet their labored breathing, and, now and then, the fall of their feet came to Sam's ears.

He was sure he could hear two men whispering under the rocks. He took a firmer hold of his rifle and tried to look through the intense darkness that covered the route by which the attack must be made.

The strain of that long wait was more trying to strength and courage than would have been a prompt attack.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes passed, and still the riflemen to the east kept up their desultory, but harmless firing.

The darkness that added to the difficulties of the defense, was not a great advantage to the attacking party.

Badger was in the advance, groping with his hands for the trail, and not daring to strike a light, for fear of making it the target for Sam.

"Keep close behind," whispered Badger to Shirley, who, as they crept on, showed a decided disposition to lag to the rear.

"Have you found the trail, Badger?"

"I think so."

"Is it steep?"

"Hist, man, don't talk, but foller close up. Here's the place where we begin to climb. Mind, it's no fool of a job to get to the top at the best of times," said Badger, as he began the ascent on hands and knees.

Shirley, trembling in every limb, came close after, his fears somewhat allayed by the comforting thought that Badger's huge form would shield him from any bullets that might be fired down.

Sam was on the alert. The sounds about the place died out, and the stillness added to the painful intensity of the situation.

Unable longer to control his feelings, Ike bent down and whispered:

"Say, Mistah Sam."

"What is it, Ike?"

"Dis yar's gittin' ticklish."

"Yes; be still."

Unmindful of this injunction, Ike continued:

"Somet'ing got to be did mighty soon, or dis chile can't stan' de strain."

"Wait."

"But it's time to heab de rocks."

"Not till I give the word."

"But as I'm a sinner I can heah 'em!"

"Where?"

"Right close by ——"

Ike's sentence was cut short by the flash and crack of a pistol fired by a man not twenty feet away.

With a "spat" the bullet splintered against the rocks a few feet above Sam's head.

The time for immediate action had come.

"Now, boys!" shouted Sam, in ringing tones.

By the flash of his own rifle he saw the forms of two men on the trail outside the wall he had thrown up.

With the strength of desperation, Ike and Wah Shin rose to their feet and began hurling stones into the path, while Sam fired as rapidly as he could throw shells into the breech of his rifle.

In less time than it takes to record the act, the defenders knew that the assault had been a failure.

Oaths, groans and the crashing of bodies, two score feet below, told that Badger and Shirley did not retreat

of their own volition, but in accordance with the one law which they could not violate, viz.: gravitation.

Cries for help went up from the base of the rock, and the two men who had been indulging in harmless rifle practice hastened to the relief of their less fortunate companions.

"Hello, boys, any one hurt?" asked one.

"Hurt!" groaned Badger. "They've done for me."

"Oh, I guess not. Let us get a light and see how things is," said the landlord.

"Don't make a light," protested Shirley.

"Why not?"

"Because they'll fire at it."

"No, but go up and clean them fellows out. I could die happy if I knowed you'd cleaned 'em out," gasped Badger.

"Wa'al," said the landlord, "you can't expect me to go up there and try to do anything after the fist you two have made of it. I don't mind anything in reason, but that's axin' a leetle too much."

"Something must be done, and at once," said Frank Shirley.

"What do you want done?" asked the landlord, already heartily sick of the undertaking.

"I am hurt as well as Badger."

"Sorry for that."

"And you two must help us on our horses and get us away from here."

"Of course we'll stick by you," said the landlord. "But atween you and me and the rock, Mr. Shirley, I

kinder think, perhaps, it mout be better, if so be you steered cl'ar of Hurley's Gulch for awhile——"

The man stopped suddenly, his attention being attracted by the barking of a dog in the distance.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

TO THE RESCUE.

BADGER and Shirley were carried from under the rock, but when it came to lifting them on the horses it was found that they were too much injured to ride.

"Thar ain't no use in my tryin' it," groaned Badger. "I can't sit in the saddle."

"Then what's to be did?" asked the landlord.

"Hide me away, and when daylight comes send some of the boys after me with a stretcher."

"That'd never do," protested the landlord.

"Why not?"

"Coz, if you was to git back to the Gulch at this time all the chances is they'd make you stretch hemp. Fact is, ole feller, you and Shirley here has played your last keerds, and I'm downright sorry to say the game has gone agin you in a most surprisin' bad way."

"Don't leave me!" whined Shirley. "Take care of me and I'll pay you your own price."

"Oh, that's all right," said the landlord, who, with his companion, had placed the two men side by side on their saddle blankets and left with them two canteens. "But the barkin' of that dog comes nearer and nearer,

and I don't like it. Keep a stiff upper lip and I'll send out and see how you are after sun-up."

With this promise the landlord and his companion, with an eye single to their own safety, mounted their horses and rode away.

The barking of the dog, coming from the west, was also heard by Sam and his friends.

"I tink dlat no dogee. Dlat a wolf," said Wah Shin.

"Wolf!" repeated Ike with fine scorn. "That's no wolf. Heah him! Jist lissen, Mistah Sam! Ain't dat music, an' can't yeh make it out?"

"I hear it, Ike," said Sam, "and the animal is evidently running fast and coming this way."

"It's Maj! It's deah ole Maj!" shouted Ike, and in his excitement he dashed against the wall, and with a roar like Niagara the rocks went thundering down the trail.

Sam heard the two horsemen galloping away, but as he could not tell whether they were retreating or going after reinforcements he determined not to abate his vigilance so long as there was a sign of danger.

Again he heard something clambering up the rocks, and he was on the point of firing, when a short, joyous bark rang out, and the next instant Maj was in their midst.

The faithful creature was nearly exhausted by his long run, for he had escaped from the Apaches, but he had strength enough left to show his joy at the meeting.

He leaped at Sam, and after licking his face and hands

he turned and, with commendable impartiality, bestowed the same attention on the others.

Ike actually cried for joy, and he made an effort to take the dog in his arms, but when the first greetings were over Maj, half dead with hunger and thirst, discovered that there was water near by, and without any thought of the propriety of his conduct he plunged in and lapped till his parched skin was full.

"Oh, if Ulna was only heah now," cried Ike, "we'd be all togedder agin an' as happy as a—as a darkey in ripe watah millyon time!"

Sam was confident that Ulna had reached Hurley's Gulch, and this thought gave him so much comfort that he did not wonder why his friend had not come to his relief, for he well knew that the Indian youth would do everything that lay in his power, and he was right in this surmise.

The coming of Ulna had not only saved the lives of two men, but it had also caused a revolution in the minds of a majority of the people living at Hurley's Gulch.

To be sure, there were some who did not believe the Indian youth, and who were satisfied in their own minds that Mr. Willett and Hank Tims should be hanged, and that they would be, sooner or later; but these fellows found themselves in the minority and only whispered their belief.

Mr. Willett and Hank Tims were still under guard, for the promised proof of their innocence was not at hand; but Si Brill and Collins, now the most prominent

men in the camp, felt that the end they hoped for was very near.

Ulna, after being refreshed with food, kept his eyes open, and he was the first to discover that Badger, Shirley and the others had left Hurley's Gulch.

He at once sought out Collins and said to him:

"I saw the four men ride away."

"But men are ridin' away and a-ridin' in all the time," said Collins, who not being at all suspicious saw no harm in the act.

"True, Collins; but I am sure these men mean harm to Sam Willett."

"Nonsense."

"It is the truth."

"But you left Sam in the hands of them onary Paches, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"Then how can Badger get at him?"

"The Apaches say they are not at war with the whites——"

"I don't take no stock in them or their sayin's," said Collins.

"But they are at peace, else they would have killed Sam at once. As it is they will either rob him and turn him loose, or else hold him for a reward."

"Well?" said Collins reflectively.

"And if Badger and his gang meet the Apaches and pay the reward, then they will have Sam Willett in their power——"

"Hold!" cried Collins. "I see it all! Once in their

power they will kill the boy and get the receipt Tom Edwards gave when he was paid for the mine. Then the dogs can come back here and defy us. We must move to the rescue, Ulna! We must move at once!"

Accompanied by Ulna, Collins went to Si Brill and others of his friends, and after warning them to say nothing to Mr. Willett, he told them of his fears for Sam and urged the necessity of getting out a rescuing party at once, which he was ready to lead "if no one else didn't offer."

At this time there were not many horses in camp, and unfortunately nearly all were owned by the men who had been so bitter against Mr. Willett.

It was after midnight when Collins succeeded in getting three horses and a mule; they belonged to Mr. Willett and this limited the rescuing party to four, one of whom was Ulna, who went along as a guide, though all knew he could be depended on if there were serious work on hand.

About two hours before day they came face to face with the landlord and his companion.

"Where have you fellers been?" demanded Tom Collins.

"I don't know that it's any of your business," was the landlord's reply, "but I don't mind sayin' that we went out to see if thar was any Injuns in sight. For one, I didn't take any stock in that young Ute's story."

"Wa'al," said Collins, "there's plenty of better men than you—and I'm one of 'em, that do believe the Ute. Now what have you done with Badger and Shirley?"

"They left us 'bout dark; if you want them you must hunt 'em for yourself. I ain't no one's dog," growled the landlord.

"The man that had you for his dog might count on bein' bit, but I reckon we ken find out all we want without yer help. Go back to the Gulch and pack yer traps, for it's my 'pinion it'll be very hot there in a day or two for dogs of your breed," said Collins as he shook his bridle and rode on.

Meantime Sam, ignorant of the doings of friends and foe, kept watch on the summit of the rock.

He was completely "played out," and it was only by a strong effort of will and a constant change of position that he kept from sinking down and going to sleep like his companions.

As soon as the gray dawn began to make distant objects visible Sam awoke Ike and Wah Shin.

Sleep had only brought a temporary cessation from the pangs of hunger, but the brave fellows made no complaint.

Ike, always on the lookout, was the first to discover horsemen in the distance, coming from the direction of Hurley's Gulch.

"It 'peahs to me powahful like's ef Ulna is one ob dem yar men," said Ike.

He was not mistaken.

On came the riders at a gallop.

In the advance road Ulna.

As soon as they caught sight of Sam they waved their hats and sent up a thrilling cheer.

Sam and Ike discover the horsemen coming to their rescue.

Even the horses caught the spirit of their riders, and plunged into a faster gallop, till they came to a halt under the towering rock which Sam had defended so gallantly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SAM'S DEVOTION IS REWARDED.

"HELLO!" shouted Collins, as he and his companions dismounted and looked up at the three famished people on the rock. "How did you three gents and the dog git up thar?"

It was evident from this question that Collins was not acquainted with the rock.

"On the other side," said Sam.

"All right; we'll find the way and come up."

"Better save the trouble," said Sam. "We'll come down, and glad we are of the chance."

"Glad!" cried Ike; "dat word don't nigh begin foh to 'spress dis yar chile's feelin's. I'ze full, chuck full ob downright bliss, I is. Come along, Maj and Wah, foh it does seem powahful like's ef de trouble had jest 'bout come to an ind."

Down over the ruin of the wall they clambered, and at the foot stood Ulna—the faithful.

The Indian may be a stoic under suffering, but there are no people in the world so ready to give expression to joy, nor so demonstrative where the better impulses of the heart are called out.

"Sam! Sam! My friend, thank God you are safe!" cried Ulna, and his eyes looked larger and blacker for

their tears as he caught his friend to his breast and kissed him first on one cheek and then on the other.

Ike and Wah Shin shook hands with every one again and again, and then they jointly performed a joy-dance, in which the dog joined, to the music of his own glad barking.

"Looks like's ef you'd been corralled up thar," said Collins, looking up at the defense and down at the red stains on the stones at the bottom.

"We have that," replied Sam, and then briefly and with characteristic modesty, he told of the fight of the night before.

"And the paper," said Collins; "the receipt Tom Edwards said he didn't give yer father?"

"I've got it here," said Sam, pointing to the saddle-bags slung over his shoulder.

"Wa'al, I felt most sure it'd turn up. But what became of Badger and Shirley?"

"I think they were hurt, but I hope not badly," said Sam.

"Some one's hurt, and purty bad, too," said one of Collins' men.

"How do you know that, Jack?"

"Jest look over thar, Collins," said the man, pointing to a wall some distance off, at the side of which two men appeared to be sleeping.

On the instant all went over, and they discovered Shirley and Badger.

The former was dead, but an examination showed that

he had received no wound that would account for his demise.

"No, boys," groaned Badger, "he wasn't hurt much at all, but I was the feller that suffered."

"Then how did Shirley come to die?" asked Collins.

"Die! Coz, he was a coward."

"What do you mean, Badger?"

"He said the game was up, so he took poison to finish hisself."

"Poison!" exclaimed all.

"Yes, poison. He wanted me to take some, too, but I'd rather hang. Look round and you'll find the thing that held it."

The searchers did not have far to look, for clasped in the dead man's right hand they found a small vial with a death's head and cross-bones on the label, which contained the legend, in red letters, "Sulph. Morphia.'

"Badger."

"Yes, Collins."

"What brought you fellows out here."

"Can't you guess?"

"I can, but I'd rather you'd tell me."

"And you won't think no harder of me for it."

"Badger," replied Collins, "I can't think of anything you could do—unless you chanced to be decent—that would make me think any different of you than I do now."

"Wa'al, I reckon I ain't got long to live, so I'll tell the downright truth for once——"

"What is it?"

"Shirley, Jake and another feller came out with me to do for young Willett, but we didn't connect. Thar, that's all I'll say at present," and Badger closed his eyes and looked to be as dead as the man lying by his side.

"Men that starts out to make the life-path hard for other folks," said Collins, with much feeling in his voice, "generally fetches up with a short turn themselves, and falls into the pit dug for others. Now, boys, what's best to be did next?"

"Thar's nothin' to be did," said the man who had spoken before, "but to sarch the body and then bury it. This is as good a place as back at the Gulch. When we've did that we'll tote Badger 'long with us and let him tell his story."

As this advice seemed good, it was acted on at once.

After taking from the pockets such valuables and papers as might cast light on his own life, or be sent to his friends, the men scraped out a grave with their knives, and in it they laid the body of one man who had ruined himself in trying "to make the life-path hard for other folks."

When preparations were being made for the return to Hurley's Gulch, Badger--who evidently thought he was to be left there—lost all the coarse spirit that once characterized him, and he whined:

"Oh, don't leave me out here to the wolves, boys. Take me to the Gulch with you and I'll confess all."

"We'll tote you back, never fear," said Collins. "We ain't the kind of men that like to see sufferin', even if it's deserved."

The horses of Shirley and Badger were found near by. One of these was given to Sam, who said he would carry Wah Shin behind him if some one else would carry Ike.

Ulna, who rode a mule and was the lightest one of the party, gladly consented to ride double with Ike. This being arranged, the next question was the conveyance of the wounded Badger.

He was given stimulants from his own canteen, and then lifted into his own saddle. With a strong man on either side to keep him from falling, the party started back to Hurley's Gulch.

Within two hours they were at their destination, but long before they reached there they were seen and recognized by those who had been kindly disposed to Mr. Willett, and an extemporized committee came out to meet them.

"The paper! The paper! Have you got Tom Edwards' receipt?" was the salutation that greeted Sam, as dozens of sturdy men gathered round and shook his hand.

He had prepared for this by taking the water-stained paper from the saddle-bags, to which he had clung through all his privations.

"Here it is!" cried Sam, holding the receipt aloft. "Here it is, and I will intrust it to Mr. Collins while I go to my father."

A rousing cheer went up from the men, and that cheer was heard in the dugout by Mr. Willett and Hank Tims, and reading its meaning aright, they raised their tearful eyes and thanked God.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE LAST, BUT NOT THE LEAST IMPORTANT.

SI BRILL heard the shouting, and leaving his friends—the prisoners—to care for themselves he fairly flew out of the ravine.

He saw his "pard" holding the paper aloft and he understood all. The glow of a well-earned victory came to his bronzed face, and he sent up a cheer that started all the echoes in the gulch into life.

"All is lovely, Si!" shouted Collins. "We got the receipt, and the boy's safe. Don't wait a second but take him to his father at once. His heart is jist a hungerin' to hold young Sam next to it."

"You're right every time, old pard!" shouted Si Brill.

Sam ran to him and he was on the point of asking where his father was, when Si caught him in his arms and gave him such a hug as would have crushed one of weaker frame.

He would have carried Sam in triumph on his broad shoulders, had that young gentleman consented. As it was he took his hand, and raising his hat in the other, he ran down the gulch, cheering all the while as if the sound were essential to his progress.

Mr. Willett stood in the door of the dugout. He saw

Si accompanied by a tall, slender youth. No need to tell him who it was.

With the cry, "My boy! Oh, thank Heaven for my boy," Mr. Willett ran out and father and son were clasped in each other's arms, and their kisses and their tears mingled.

"See h'ar, Mr. Willett," called out Hank Tims, who had followed up his friend, "when you've got through a huggin' young Sam, jist turn him over to me and let me have a chance to express my sentiments on this occasion."

At sound of the dear old hunter's voice, Sam turned to him with extended hands and cried out:

"Hank, old friend, I've been through the great cañon.

"Well!" laughed Hank, as he shook Sam's hands, and patted his back by turns, "you look as if you'd been dragged through a narrer knot hole, but yer eyes are as bright as ever and you'll soon git flesh on yer bones, but through the Gerrait Cañon! oh, come, Sam, don't try to fool me so soon after we've been parted for so long ——"

"But didn't Ulna tell you?"

"So he did, Sam, but I thought mebbe his mind was affected. But never mind, we'll have lots of time to talk over our adventures when we git back to Gold Cave Camp. Well, well, I never did think, leastwise not lately, that I'd ever live to see so happy a day as this," and Hank turned his attention to Ike and Wah Shin, who had come upon the scene, nor was the dog forgotten in the warm welcome given to all.

"I tell you, Mistah Willett," said Ike, as he held his old employer's hand, "I'ze got enough to talk about till the day I die, even if I was to live for a thousand years."

"Which I hope you may, Ike. But what is that noise up the hill?" asked Mr. Willett, his attention attracted by the prolonged cheering in that direction.

They had not long to wonder, for soon Collins came dashing down the hill, his eyes glowing and a flush of triumph on his manly face.

"What's up, pard?" asked Si Brill.

"They've got at the truth!" shouted Collins.

"What truth?"

"The truth about the murder."

"Then you showed them the receipt?" said Mr. Willett, again taking Sam's hand.

"Yes; I did all that, and even then some of 'em wanted to doubt; but something has happened to settle 'em."

"What's that?" asked Hank.

"The landlord has lit out——"

"Oh!"

"But that's not all," continued Collins. "Badger is dead——"

"Dead!" echoed all.

"Yes, dead; but just before he pegged out he confessed that it was him killed Tom Edwards——"

"I was right in my belief," said Mr. Willett solemnly.

"Yes," continued Collins, "and now every man in

the camp, even those that was the bitterest, are jest achin' to see you, and to congratulate you, and to ax yer parding; so let's go up. Thar's no danger to you nor your's in Hurley's Gulch now," and there was a ring of pride in the brave fellow's voice.

The Gold Cave campers, happier than we can describe over their reunion, followed Collins from the dugout to the canvas settlement on the bluff.

As soon as the assembled miners caught sight of them they sent up such a glad shout as was never heard before nor since on the banks of that particular gulch.

At heart the great mass of men are right, and they mean to do right. Among these miners there seemed to be a general disposition to make amends as speedily as possible for their past errors.

Not satisfied with cheering and shouting their congratulations, they rushed in by twos and fours, and beginning with Mr. Willett, they lifted all the Gold Cave campers—not neglecting Ike and Wah Shin—to their shoulders, and then marched in triumphal procession to the scene of the trial at the hotel.

The flight of the proprietor did not seem to make any difference, for there was plenty of food and cooks to prepare the banquet.

Ike went at once to the place where Wah Shin was helping to get dinner.

"I'll kind o' fill up a little, Wah," said Ike, as he laid siege to a big loaf of bread and a correspondingly large piece of cold meat, "for it'll take me jist 'bout a year's

steady feedin' to catch up. You can bet that I'll never be sorry again that I didn't eat moah w'en I had a good chance."

Maj seemed to be of the same opinion, for he did not leave Ike's side for hours, and when he was next seen in public, he was truly aldermanic in his girth and evidently on good terms with himself and the world.

After a hearty dinner, which no one enjoyed more than Sam, speeches in praise of "the young cañoneers" as they were called, were made, and resolutions expressing unbounded confidence in Mr. Willett and Hank Tims were passed.

And so ended the happiest day Hurley's Gulch had ever seen, or ever saw again.

The next day our friends returned to Gold Cave Camp, but before starting off, Mr. Willett purchased the articles Sam had promised to send to the Indians, and Si Brill and Collins pledged themselves to deliver them.

Here our story ends, yet it may not be amiss to add a few words explanatory of the future of the characters in whom we have been so much interested.

Mr. Willett made a good deal of money out of the Gold Cave Camp property, but the danger from floods led him after a time to sell it at a sacrifice.

Years have passed since these adventures came to a close. To-day "Willett & Son" are among the richest and most honored miners and bankers in the Far West.

Their porter in the bank is our old friend, Ike; indeed

so great is his interest in the establishment and so highly does he think of his position that he is very positive it could not go on for a day without him.

He always speaks of the firm as "we."

"We's doin' fine," is a frequent expression of his, though nothing delights him so much as to tell of his adventures in the Great Cañon. He sneers at all other human exploits as things of no account compared with the events in which he played so prominent a part.

Mr. Willett's cook is the faithful Wah Shin. "Wah really runs the house," Sam says, but he always adds, "and it could not be run better. Wah is a standing proof that the Mongolian has a bright mind and a generous heart—that is if you get one of the right kind and treat him right."

Strange though it may seem, Ulna, as Mr. Willett's protege, came east and studied medicine, and his skill and judgment are making him famous in the West. We need not add that there is one house in Denver where "Doctor Ulna" is always a welcome and an honored guest.

"Collins, Brill & Tims" is the firm name of one of the most prosperous "concerns" in Colorado.

It is not necessary for us to speak separately of the members in order to have them recognized, though it may not be amiss to say that they are all married men, and are among the largest depositors in the bank of Willett & Son.

They make the banker's house their home when in Denver, and although Hurley's Gulch has been long since

abandoned, and the wolf unfrightened howls over its site, they love to talk over the stirring days when a son's devotion proved itself more powerful than Lynch law and vigilance committees.

LOST.

IN THE summer of 1864 Paul Seeton went to spend his holidays with his cousin, Frank More.

Frank lived in the northern part of Maine, on the outskirts of a vast forest. Paul was a Boston boy, who had scarcely ever been out of the city in his life.

It was in Aroostook county, a place famous for growing the biggest timber in the northern states, a place known to lumbermen and loved by them; with few inhabitants except those who are engaged in the timber trade; with no villages and no roads.

One day Frank proposed a fishing excursion. Their destination was about fifteen miles away, on a chain of lakes that extended far into the forest.

They set out at break of day, rode on horseback over a rough road for about two hours, and at length reached the shore of a lake.

Here they hired a boat from a man who lived in a log house, and embarking, sailed for five or six miles to a place where the lake narrowed. Here taking down their sail they rowed for some distance through a channel so narrow that the branches of the lofty pines on either side almost met. It took a good hour to pass through this, when suddenly they emerged from it and found themselves on a second lake, three or four times as large as the first.

Up went the sail again, and away they went over the second lake for about ten miles. All around grew the primeval forest, dense, dark and luxuriant. But Frank had been here before, and the scene was quite familiar.

The boat went swiftly onward, and at last approached the farthest extremity of the lake. Here a small peninsula jutted forth from the forest into the lake, which was cleared and under cultivation. Upon it arose a log hut, from the rude chimney of which smoke was curling upward.

It belonged to a man named Spence, who cultivated the ground in summer and in winter went lumbering in the woods. He lived there all alone, and apart from his solitude was very comfortable.

The boat grounded on the beach in front of Spence's hut, and the boys went up to the house. They found Spence himself at home, cooking his dinner.

The boys did not stay long. After asking a few questions as to the best fishing holes, they took to the boat again, and following Spence's directions, rowed toward a small creek which penetrated among the hills, and passing up this, at length came to a small basin enclosed by high wooded shores. Here they began to fish.

Although they waited patiently, they found, to their great disappointment, that the fish would not come. At length Paul felt a bite; he pulled up his line in a fever of agitation, and with a glow of triumph jerked into the boat a tiny fish about four inches long. But Paul's triumph was not at all shared by Frank.

"Pooh!" said he, "it's only a miserable perch."

"A perch?" said Paul. "Isn't it a good fish?"

"Good? Why, these lakes are crammed with them. It's trout we want, not these." And as Frank said this he jerked his own line with some complacency. Soon something bit his bait. He jerked it out and found, to his disgust, another perch.

At length Frank said that he was going up the woods a little distance, to a lake which was about a mile off, connected with this by a brook. He could follow the windings of the brook and easily get there.

Paul, however, thought he would stay where he was, for the woods looked very rough, and he enjoyed being in a boat, even if he didn't catch anything.

So Frank started off, promising to be back within an hour.

Paul continued his fishing. He moved the boat to the opposite shore. No bites came—that is, none came to the bait, but he soon became aware of other bites, which he did not expect. These were produced by swarms of mosquitoes, which gathered so thickly that at last Paul had to pull in his line and give himself to self-defense. He shifted the position of the boat a dozen times, but his persecutors followed him. At last he could stand it no longer, and concluded to go after Frank.

Nearly an hour had passed, and it was about time for Frank to return. It was Paul's intention to stroll along the brook, and he would be certain either to meet Frank in his return, or else he would find him at the lake to which he had gone.

It was very swampy, and Paul sank in up to his knees for some distance, but at length reached rising ground. The brook was only a small one, and was bordered by

such dense underbrush that Paul found it impossible to follow it. In fact, a much better path appeared.

This was a rough track, overgrown with moss and ferns, which was used by the lumbermen in winter. It went up from the lake apparently in the same direction as the brook.

So he walked along this path, forcing his way through alder bushes and tangled ferns, until at last he came to a stop in front of a wide and impassable marsh.

The lumber path in winter ran across this, but now it could not be traversed. So Paul tried to go around it. But after completing about half the circuit, he reached a swampy place which he could not cross.

He now retraced his steps, and at length decided to return to the boat and wait there.

The lumber path could not be very easily found, but at last he turned into a place which looked very much like it, and walked on for some distance. But the way was rough. At length the path ceased altogether. He found himself in the wild wood.

He saw now that he had missed the path, but thought that the best plan would be to keep straight on, and get back to the lake. So he kept on. It was very hard work. The ground was covered with moss, in some places it was spongy, in others it was overgrown with ferns, while every now and then he would have to climb over the trunk of some fallen tree.

In this way he struggled onward for a long time, and wondered why he could not see any signs of the lake. At last he began to grow discouraged. The full conviction forced itself upon him that he had lost his way.

He had been wandering; how long a time and how far he did not know.

There were no signs whatever of the lake. What to do he could not tell. He stood still, and looked around. Dense forest trees arose on every side, shutting out the view, and enclosing him with their gloomy shades.

Then he called as loud as he could. There was no answer. He called again and again, and waited for a long time after each cry to hear whether there was any response. But none came.

What to do now was the question. He was not a coward, but any one might well have been alarmed, lost in those vast, trackless forests. Paul was alarmed, of course; but he was a spirited boy, and was not inclined to sit down and give up. After a few minutes he wisely decided that it was necessary to have some plan, and choose some definite direction in which to go.

So he concluded that the safest way for him would be to retrace his steps as carefully as possible.

Back he went, and managed to recover his track, but lost sight of it again, and found himself once more completely at a loss.

Turning on his own track in this way had only severed him utterly from the last faint hold which he had on the possible direction of the lake.

Once more he stood and considered, and finally after making up his mind as to the probable position of the lake, he started again with the determination to keep on in as straight a line as possible in that one direction.

His course was rough and toilsome in the extreme. Swamps, bogs, thick ferns, dense underbrush, tangled alders, fallen forest trees, huge rocks, all came by turns

before his path, and all had by turns to be passed through or surmounted. Paul's city life had not fitted him for a task like this; but despair gave him strength.

Hours passed. Every hour brought fresh difficulties. His strength and resolution gradually gave way. No signs of escape had shown themselves. No sounds had come to his ears which promised help. He felt himself alone; alone to struggle with his dismal fate.

At last he reached rising ground. Here the woods were clear. The trees stood far apart, and the walking was easy. Utterly worn out, he toiled on and at length reached the crest of the hill.

Scarcely had he done so than an exclamation burst from him. Immediately below lay a broad sheet of water. He hurried down to the margin, and looked anxiously around in all directions.

There was nothing, however, but a sheet of water surrounded by woods. Whether this was the lake which he had left, or some other one, he could not tell. At any rate he was too fatigued to make any further exertion, so he flung himself upon the ground to rest.

Gradually sleep overtook him, and his slumber was so sound that he actually did not awake till the following day. On rousing himself he heard the birds singing, and felt the fresh, cool air of the morning.

He was very hungry, but felt rested and refreshed, and went at once to examine his position.

From the place where he stood he could see the end of the lake to the right, but on the left the view was impeded by a promontory.

His first effort now was to go to the promontory and examine the other end. The distance was not great, and he soon reached the place.

He looked eagerly down the lake, when, to his unutterable delight, he saw at the lower end the lone cottage to which the boat had carried him the day before.

All was now plain. He had wandered back to the lake blindly, and by such an extraordinary circuit that he had come to the shore about five miles away from the cottage.

He now set forth to work his way back to the cottage. He followed the windings of the shores, keeping the water always in sight. The distance was only five or six miles, but so circuitous was the shore, so full of indentations, and so rough was the way, that it was nearly evening when he reached the cottage.

No one was there when he arrived, but he waited, and at dusk a boat came over the water with Spence and Frank. For a day and a half they had been scouring the woods for him, and Frank, in his despair, did not know what to do. Paul was received as one who had risen from the dead.

FATE OF AN ENTRAPPED BEAR.

WILD beasts, in their wanderings through the forests, often meet and fight in the most savage manner. Here is a story told the writer, last summer, by an old gentleman in Somerest county, Maine:

"One of the toughest fights I ever saw," said he, "came off over behind that mountain yonder. It was years ago. Perhaps I saw with a boy's eyes at that time; I was but fourteen years old, then. But you shall have the story:

"There wa'n't a railroad in the state, in those days. Whenever any of the farmers wanted to go down to Farmington, or Norridgewock, or to Portland, they had to go with their teams; and when making a trip to the latter place were often gone a week or ten days.

"Quite late in the fall my father and Mr. Wilber, our nearest neighbor, had gone to Portland in company. Always during their absence we boys used the time in fishing, gunning, and other sports such as boys delight in. They had been gone two days, when early the third morning after their departure Jed Wilber came running to our house, all excitement.

"'The bears have been killing our sheep!' he exclaimed. 'They came into the little pasture last night, killed the old four-year-old, and a lamb, dragged

them out into the bushes, and there we found their pelts taken off and rolled up, as nice as a butcher could do it.'

"'Oh, you ought to have shut them up, Jed,' said grandmother.

"'I know it,' said Jed. 'Father told us to, every night. But we were playing last night, and forgot it.'

"'The bear 'll be back, to-night,' said I.

"'Of course he will,' said Jed, 'and that's what I am over here for—I want to get your bear-trap. I know just how to set it,' he went on, seeing grandmother hesitate. 'I saw 'em set it last winter a dozen times.'

"'Well, you can have the trap,' said grandmother. 'But mind it don't spring, and catch your hands or feet.'

"Jed and I brought the trap from the woodhouse chamber. It was tremendously heavy—weighing sixty or seventy pounds. But between us we carried it up to the Wilbers', and with Sol's help (Sol was Jed's next younger brother) we took it to the pasture. Then, by using a crowbar we managed, after a deal of prying and holding, to press down the stiff springs, and so set it. This done, we chained it to a four-foot log of green spruce, and left it near the spot where the bear had killed the sheep. For a bait, we laid partially under it a sheep's head, from a sheep that had lately been slaughtered by Mr. Wilber.

"Perhaps some of the boys may wonder why the lads did not chain the trap to a stump, or a standing tree. Hunters never chain a bear-trap fast to the spot where they set it. They clog it, that is, fasten a heavy stick or log to it, for the bear to drag. If caught and held fast, at first, a large bear would demolish any trap. But if

allowed to run with it, the clog will at length weary him so that he may be easily overtaken and shot.

"Early the next morning," continued the old man, "I ran over to Wilber's, and we hurried to the pasture. The sheep's head was gone, but the bear, if indeed it was one, had kept his legs out of the trap. We rebaited it with mutton shanks, and the next morning Jed came to the house before I was dressed.

"'The trap's gone!' he shouted. 'Get your gun. We must follow him!'

"Hastily swallowing some breakfast, I loaded the gun with slugs, and with Jed and Sol rushed to the pasture. Sure enough the trap was gone, clog and all. The place where it had been placed bore marks of a struggle; the turf was gouged up, and in several spots there were blood-drops on the grass, and on the dry leaves. It was in October, the last of the month. The brakes in the woods were dead, but still standing. These had been pressed to the ground, and made a broad trail.

"By noon we gained the crest of a high ridge, or mountain, five or six miles to the westward. The farther side fell off abruptly to the bank of a small river. This side, too, was covered with thick hemlock and spruce. We hesitated about going further. It would be nearly night by the time we got back, if we started for home now. But we wanted to save the trap. If we went back, not only should we lose the bear, but the trap besides, and Jed, whose carelessness had cost the loss of two sheep, was especially anxious to get the bear.

"Sol had brought a lunch. We divided it between

us, and again taking up our guns, followed the trail down into the dark growth, toward the river. An hour took us to the stream. But here, instead of coming upon the bear, as we had expected, we found that he had turned up the bank to the north. We kept on, however. There was a sort of fascination in the chase, even though every mile was taking us further into the wilderness.

"The late October afternoon was waning. Already the shadow of a large mountain to the westward was falling over the forest, in the valley where we were. The valley narrowed to a rocky ravine as we went on, and the mountain, with its dark spruces, seemed to tower threateningly over us.

"'It's no use, Jed,' said I; 'we ought to go home. I know you want——'

"'Hark!' exclaimed Sol.

"A sharp yelp, as if from a hurt dog, rang out. It seemed to come to us from only a short distance. Almost instantly it was followed by a long yell, and a chorus of howls. Snap ran, crouching, between our legs.

"'Wolves!' cried Jed.

"We stood listening, breathlessly. In a moment the yell burst out again, followed by yelps, snarls, and the sounds of a general fight.

"'I'll bet they're afoul of the bear,' whispered Jed.

"The uproar continued.

"'If they are, they won't mind us,' continued Jed. 'Let's creep up, and see.'

"Cocking our guns, we moved cautiously forward. The yells grew louder, and we heard growls. At length,

turning a little bend of the ravine, we peered round a great boulder and saw a sight I shall never forget. With his back against a rock sat the bear—a tremendous fellow he looked—with the trap on his paw, while about him leaped, and surged, and snapped, fifteen or twenty gray wolves, their white teeth grinning, and their eyes flashing green fire. The bear was fighting for life against the whole of them.

"The wolves had struck upon his trail, and the smell of the blood that came from the leg crushed in the trap had made them furious. He fought hard, swinging the trap clog, as he struck with his forelegs to beat them off.

"Occasionally, as the ravenous creatures leaped at his throat, he would catch one with his uninjured paw and give him a hug that drew out a smothered yelp. Sometimes five or six of the wolves would jump at the bear at the same time, and for a moment we would lose sight of him, but he brushed them away, and rose again. The growls, yells and snapping jaws were savage beyond description. It grew dusk as we watched the fight.

"'What can we do?' said Sol.

"'It would be useless for us to interfere,' said I; 'they're bound to have him.'

"'Let's fire among them, though,' said Jed; 'I haven't brought a loaded gun up here for nothing. All together now.'

"All three of us fired together at the growling, struggling pack.

"A moment's silence followed the reports, then a long howl. We shrank back around the boulder, out

of sight. Then a sudden panic seized us, and we ran down the ravine, and did not stop till we were a mile below. A faint howl came echoing through the somber forest.

"'They are not chasing us,' said Jed; 'guess we riddled some of 'em!'

"Night fell as we climbed the steep ridge. We had a dark time going home through the woods. Fortunately, Sol had a match in his pocket, and coming to an old white birch stub, we tore off several rolls of the dried bark. By fastening these to the end of a stick and lighting them, we were able to pick our way through the woods. It was a hazy night. The moon showed dimly. The glimpses we now and then got of it enabled us to keep a straight course. It was after eight o'clock when we reached home, and worried enough the folks had been about us.

"The next forenoon we started for the ravine again. We were curious to know how the fight terminated; besides, it was best to get the trap, if possible, to avert the storm that would burst on Jed's head when his father came home. Taking a shorter cut through the woods, we reached the place where we had seen the wolves, about eleven o'clock.

"No sound was heard save the rippling of the stream among the rocks. We stole cautiously to the boulder, where we had stood the night before, and looked from behind it. Nothing was in sight.

"'Gone,' said Jed. 'Let's go up, and see where they had their fight.'

"A sly little mink darted away, and into the stream as we approached. Beyond was a ghastly sight! There

lay the skull and bones of the bear, gnawed clean, and showing yellow-white; and there lay the trap, still griping with its iron jaws the bone of one paw.

All the brakes were smashed down, and the bushes and the rock were besmeared with blood and hair. About the trap, within a radius of a few rods, lay the bones and skulls of two of the wolves, eaten by their comrades. Perhaps the bear had killed them, or perchance our shots had caused their death. It looked as if other wolves had come to the feast.

"'Come, come!' muttered Jed. 'Let's be off before they come back.'

"We took the trap to the stream to cleanse it, and then placing it on two poles we started for home. And a *tug* it gave us, too!"

A FIGHT IN THE WOODS.

SOME years ago, while in the northern part of Maine, I spent the month of September and a portion of October at a "hay-farm" on the borders of Chamberlain Lake—Lake Apmoogenegamook, the Indians used to call it. The whole region was almost an unbroken wilderness. Game was plenty, and by way of recreation from my duties as an assistant engineer I had set up a "line of traps" for mink and sable—"saple," as old trappers say—along a small but very rapid, noisy stream called Bear Brook, which comes down into the lake through a gorge between two high spruce-clad mountains.

Huge boulders had rolled down the sides, and lay piled along the bed of the gorge. The brook, which was the outlet of a small pond, pent up among the ridges above, foamed and roared and gurgled down among rocks shaded by thick, black spruces, which leaned out from the sides of the ravine.

It was a wild place. I had stumbled upon it, one afternoon, while hunting a caribou (a kind of deer) some weeks before, and knew it must be good trapping ground; for the rocks and clear, black pools, in short the whole place had that peculiar, fishy smell which bespoke an abundance of trout; and where trout abound there are sure to be mink.

My traps were of that sort which hunters call "figure four" traps, made of stakes and poles, with a figure-four spring. Perhaps some of our boy readers may have caught squirrels in that way. For bait I used trout from the brook. I carried my hook and line with me, and after setting a trap, threw in my hook and pulled out trout enough to bait it. My line extended about a mile up the gorge, and comprised some twenty-five or thirty traps.

After setting them, I shot a number of red squirrels for a "drag," and thus connected the traps together. Perhaps I should explain that a *drag* is a bundle of squirrels or partridges newly killed and from which the blood is dripping, which are dragged along by a withe from trap to trap to make a trail and scent, so that the mink and sable will follow it.

It is customary to visit mink traps once in two or three days. But as I had plenty of time just then, I went to mine every forenoon.

During the first week after setting them I had excellent luck. I caught eleven mink and three sable—about fifty dollars' worth, as I reckoned it. My hopes of making a small fortune in the fur business were very sanguine, until one morning I found every trap torn up! The poles and stakes were scattered over the ground, spindles were broken to pieces, and at one or two places where there had been a mink in the trap, the head and bits of fur were lying about as if it had been devoured.

At first I thought that perhaps some fellow who had intended to trap there had done the mischief to drive me away (a very common trick among rival trappers);

but when I saw that the minks had been torn to pieces, I knew the destruction was the work of some animal—a fisher, most likely, or as some call it, a "black-cat."

I had never yet seen one of these creatures, but had often heard hunters and trappers tell what pests they were, following them on their rounds, robbing and tearing up their traps almost as rapidly as they could set them. Indeed, I had read in Baird's—I believe it was Baird's—Works on Natural History, that the fisher-cat, or *mustela canadensis*, is a very fierce carnivorous animal of the weasel family, a most determined fighter and more than a match for a common hound.

Well, I had nothing to do but to set the traps again, a task which I did in the course of the day, really hoping that the beast had merely paid the place a transient visit, and gone on upon his wanderings.

But the next morning showed my hopes were vain, for he had "gone through" my *line* again, and every trap was upset. It really seemed as if the "varmint" had taken a malicious delight in tearing them to pieces.

At one of the traps a fine sable had been caught, and as if for very mischief the marauder had torn the beautiful skin, which was worth ten or a dozen dollars, to shreds.

Surely, if there is a business in the world that demands patience and perseverance, it is trapping. At least it took about all I could summon to go resignedly to work, make new spindles, catch fresh bait, and set the traps again, especially with the prospect of having the same task to perform the next morning.

I went at it, however, and by eleven o'clock had them all reset save one, the upper one, where the sable had

been caught, when, on approaching it through the thick spruces, I saw a large raccoon gnawing the sable's head. Seeing me at the same instant, he caught up the head, and before I could unsling my gun scuttled away out of sight.

Was it possible that a 'coon had been doing all this mischief? I knew them to be adepts at a variety of woods tricks, but had never heard of their robbing traps before. Here was one caught gnawing a sable's head in the vicinity of the broken traps. Circumstantial evidence, as they say in court, was strong against him.

I determined to watch—that trap, at least.

Going over to our camp on the lake, I took a hasty lunch, and putting a fresh charge into my gun went back to the ravine. A few rods from the place where I had surprised the 'coon there was a thick clump of low spruces. Here I hid myself and began my watch.

The afternoon dragged away. Crows and hawks cawed and screamed; kingfishers and squirrels chickered and chirred, but no animal came near the traps. The sun was setting behind the high, black mountain, twilight began to dim the narrow valley.

Thinking I had had my labor for my pains, I was about crawling out of my hiding-place, when a twig snapped in the direction of the traps, and turning quickly I saw the 'coon coming up the bank of the brook, the same one, I was sure, that I had seen before, because of its unusual size.

With a glance around, to see that there was no danger near, he ambled along to the spot where the sable's head had been, and began sniffing at the shreds and bits of fur which lay about. Wishing to see if he would

touch the trap, I did not stir, but watched his movements.

After picking up the bits of skin, he walked round the trap several times, with his queer, quizzical face askew, examining it. Then happening to scent one of the sable's legs which lay at a little distance, he ran to it and began to eat it. I could hear his sharp teeth upon the bones. Suddenly he stopped, listened, then growled. Very much to my surprise, there was an answering growl. Then another and another response. In a moment more, from behind a great rock in the bank, there stole out a large, black animal, an object of the 'coon's utter abhorrence, evidently.

Fresh growls greeted the appearance of the intruder, who came stealthily forward. He was a wicked looking fellow, and had evidently hostile intentions.

The 'coon rose to his feet, lifting his back like a bear or a cat, and growling all the while. The newcomer crouched almost to the earth, but continued to steal up to the 'coon until within a yard or two.

There they stood facing each other, getting more angry every moment; and evidently intended to have a big "set to." I had no wish to interfere, and was contented to remain a spectator. The two thieves might settle their quarrels between themselves. I wasn't at all certain to which of them I stood indebted for my extra labor, and concluded to keep my charge of shot for whichever of them survived the fray.

The growls rose to shrieks; the fisher, for such I judged it to be, wriggling his black tail, and the 'coon getting his back still higher. Then came a sudden grab, quick as a flash, and a prodigious scuffle. Over

and over they rolled, grappling and tearing; now the gray tail would whisk up in sight, then the black one. The fur flew, and that strong, disagreeable odor, sometimes noticed when a cat spits, was wafted out to my hiding-place.

It was hard to tell which was the best fighter. Gray fur and black fur seemed to be getting torn out in about equal snatches. Suddenly the 'coon got away from his antagonist, and running to the foot of a great spruce tree standing near, went like a dart up the trunk to the lower limbs. There he faced about.

The fisher followed to the tree and looked up. He saw his late foe, growled, and then began to climb after him. He was not so good a climber as the 'coon, but scratched his way up with true weasel determination. The moment he came within reach the racoon jumped at him, regardless of the height from the ground, and fastened upon his back. The shock caused the fisher to lose his hold, and down both animals dropped with tremendous force, sufficient to knock the breath out of them, I thought. But they clung to each other, and dug and bit with the fury of maniacs. 'Coons are noted fighters; and as for the fishers, they never give up while the breath of life is in them.

Presently the 'coon broke away again, and once more ran to the tree, this time going up its trunk, out of sight, among the branches at the very top. It looked as if he was getting about all the fight he cared to have.

Not so with the big weasel. He instantly followed his antagonist, clumsily but surely clawing his way up the trunk. It took him some time to reach the top, but he got there at last. Another grapple ensued among

the very topmost boughs, and they both came tumbling to the ground, catching at the limbs as they fell; but grappling afresh they rolled down the steep bank to the edge of the water.

Meanwhile it had grown so dark that I could but just see their writhing forms. The growling, grappling sound continued, however, and I could hear them splash in the water. Then there came a lull. One or the other had "given in," I felt sure. Which was the victor?

Cocking my gun, I crept to the bank. As nearly as I could make out the situation, the fisher was holding the 'coon by the throat.

I took a step forward. A twig snapped under my foot. Instantly a pair of fiery eyes glared up at me in the gloom; and with a harsh snarl the fisher raised himself. But the 'coon didn't stir; he was dead.

It seemed almost too bad to shoot the victor of so desperate a fight; but thinking of my traps I hardened my heart and fired. The fisher reared up, fell over, then recovering its legs, leaped at me with all the ferocity of its bloodthirsty race. But the heavy buckshot had surely done its work, and with another attempt to spring at me the animal fell back dead.

I had no more trouble with my traps.

THE END.

Date Due

FEB 3 -